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Caroline Makena Kobia

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, ckobia8@gmail.com*

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WHY PASS ON FASHION VIRAL MESSAGE? THE MODERATING ROLE  
OF CONSUMERS' FASHION TRAITS, MESSAGE TRAITS AND  
INDIVIDUAL DYNAMICS TRAITS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Department of Textiles, Apparel Design and Merchandising

by  
Caroline Makena Kobia  
B.Ed., Moi University, 2000  
PgD, Kenya Institute of Professional Counseling, 2003  
M.S., Louisiana State University, 2011  
December 2014

This dissertation is dedicated to God who is sovereign and full of love. His love causes him to desire our everlasting welfare, and His sovereignty and power enables him to secure it.

“This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in my eyes” Psalm 118:23

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## **ABSTRACT**

Social media is being used as platforms for viral marketing. Although there is some evidence on the usefulness of viral marketing from the marketers' perspective, little is known about the motivations, attitudes, and behaviors of consumers engaged in this marketing instrument. As the social media platform continues to grow, understanding the characteristics and motivations of key players is invaluable for marketers and communicators who deal with message strategy and media outreach. Fashion companies have noticed this change and want to be present in the social media in different ways. This research represents a comprehensive attempt to examine the factors that impact on consumer usage of social media and their behavioral intentions to forward fashion viral messages by developing an attitudinal model that integrated uses and gratification theory and elaboration likelihood model; proposing that the relationship is moderated by individual dynamic traits, message traits and consumer fashion traits.

Empirical data was collected from a convenience sample of 381 college students in two southeastern universities via an online survey. Validity and reliability of research scales were assessed. Hypothesized relationships and moderating effects were tested using two-step structural equation modeling approach. Within the general model the findings show that individuals will forward a fashion viral message if they have stronger favorable utilitarian and value-expressive attitudes towards the message. Motivations did not significantly impact attitudes of the consumer with an exception of the dimension of interpersonal utility that impacts individual's value expressive attitude. The results of moderating variables indicate that message traits (functional and experiential oriented) impact consumers' utilitarian and value-expressive attitudes. In relation to consumer fashion traits, there was no significant difference among

consumers with high or low fashion leadership and those with high or low fashion involvement. Individual dynamics traits (viral dynamics and structural social capital) showed some moderating effects on the relationships between motivations and attitudes toward a social media marketing message. The results add to existing literature related to viral marketing and validate the claim that viral marketing can be used for marketing purposes resulting in increased business for firms. Theoretical and practical implications were provided based on research findings.

**Keywords**

Social media; viral marketing; word-of-mouth; moderating variables

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Rationale**

Marketing is an integrated process through which companies build strong consumer relationships with the aim of satisfying consumers' needs and wants and consequently create value for customers and increase brand equity (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009). The process of marketing is an important aspect that businesses need to focus on if their marketing goals are to be achieved. The accelerating growth in social media use in the recent years has been revolutionary for the new millennium and has impacted many companies' operation and profitability. The enormous growth of social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, blogs, and viral worlds) and plethora participation of consumers in these platforms make it imperative for companies to reexamine their business strategies.

With consumers showing increasing resistance to traditional forms of advertising such as TV or newspaper ads, marketers have turned to alternate strategies, including viral marketing. Viral marketing can be viewed as an online marketing message developed by companies to encourage customers to forward the message to members of their social network; it exploits existing social networks by encouraging customers to share product information with their friends (Wilson, 2012). Social media is being used as the platform for viral marketing campaigns. With the ever increasingly competitive business environment, more marketers are using viral marketing campaigns to reach consumers more efficiently at lower cost. The goal is to motivate consumers to take action as a result of the message, including selecting the products, services or brands promoted while passing the message to others through individuals' social networks. Research indicates the great potentials of viral marketing campaigns to marketers, however, little is known about the motivations, attitudes, and behaviors in relation to viral

marketing (Botha & Reyneke, 2013). As the social media platform continues to advance, understanding the consumers' characteristics and their motivations of interacting with social media messages is invaluable for marketers and communicators who deal with message strategy and media outreach.

Marketers see the potential of social media and are using viral marketing campaigns to make their products and brands known, especially for fashion brands (Wolny & Mueller, 2013) for new styles to reach out to large populations and to be accepted by the market in a timely manner. It necessitates companies to engage and participate in consumer to consumer (C2C) communication, if they want to optimize their capabilities through the social media with its capacity to foster an online spread. Most fashion brands still consider traditional media as their main marketing channel (Messina, February 04, 2013), while others have noticed the opportunities of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter in marketing (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010) to spread words about their new styles for each season.

The phenomenon of social media has become very popular among fashion consumers and companies within recent years (Nielsen, 2011). The fashion industry has changed tremendously with adoption and diffusion of information technologies and the change continues as new types of online business models are needed to reach ever more demanding and digitalized consumers (Kulmala, Mesiranta, & Tuominen, 2013). Fashion consumers are active in social media environments, and produce increasing amount of electronic word-of-mouth in online communities. In these online communities, consumers share and write openly about values, meanings, and feelings of various fashion products and services. Consumers deem the postings from other consumers to be more trustworthy than those from the marketing professionals (Day,

1971). The digital era makes it possible for the public to be a major part of the information process.

Marketing managers are innovatively searching for individuals in social media, through whom they can seed marketing messages for viral spread. In the fashion cycle, great emphasis is placed on fashion leaders and the role they play in influencing the followers (Beaudoin, Moore, & Goldsmith, 2000; Leisa Reinecke Flynn, Goldsmith, & Eastman, 1996; E. C. Hirschman & Adcock, 1978). Fashion leaders have been the focus in academic research and practical operations because it is believed that fashion leaders trickle the process of new product adoption and diffusion. However, in the social media environment, marketers could reach and influence a large audience at the same time rather than following traditional adoption and diffusion cycle where the leaders adopt the idea first and then influence the followers. Namely, it might be equally important for marketers to target both fashion leaders and followers to spread out marketing message with speed and scope. Practically, both fashion leaders and followers are vital to marketers in the social media environments. Consequently, it is imperative to understand whether and how fashion leaders and followers differ in terms of social media usage and viral message responses.

Prevailing studies on uses of social media has focused on understanding the impact of social media usage on brands and their ability to monetize it (Kozinets et al., 2010; Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009). (Abedniya, 2010); (Moran & Gossieaux, 2010); While it is certainly useful for companies to know this, marketers using fashion viral marketing campaigns may find it important to explore the motivation and attitudes of both fashion leaders and followers in order to develop seeding messages that attract both leaders and followers to forward the marketing messages to make them viral. For viral marketing campaigns to be successful, the firm's tone,

language and topics need to be relevant to their consumers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009). In a social media environment, viral marketing campaigns that are not relevant to consumers are simply a digital form of mass-marketing (Ferguson, 2008). Understanding fashion viral marketing campaigns in social media is paramount, as this influences consumer spending (Kozinets et al., 2010).

This study examines moderating variables of individual dynamics traits, message traits and consumer fashion traits in social media usage and how they relate to consumer motivation, attitude and forwarding behavior and subsequently applies it in the context of fashion viral marketing. Two aspects of fashion consumer traits, fashion leadership and fashion involvement, are examined. Fashion leadership is defined as the ability to sway others to accept a new fashion or style (Stone, 2004). I examined the difference between fashion leaders and followers in a social media context and their attitudes and intention to forward fashion viral messages. Fashion involvement refers to the degree to which consumers are interested in fashion and the amount of importance that is placed on the category (Eun Joo, Eun Young, & Judith Cardona, 2006). Research has demonstrated that people who score high in fashion involvement are more likely to show interests in fashion and be heavy clothing buyers (Fairhurst, Gentry, & Good, 1989). Fashion involvement may also reflect the extent to which a consumer views the related fashion messages as a central part of their life and hence their forwarding behavior.

In relation to individual dynamics in social media, viral dynamics and structural social capital are identified as factors indicating individuals' involvement with social media and the degree to which they have been using social media. Viral dynamics refer to the frequency with which viral messages are opened and forwarded. Structural social capital is defined as the size of

an individual's social media network and the frequency of contact among contacts within his or her social media networks (José-Cabezudo & Camarero-Izquierdo, 2012).

## **1.2 Research Questions**

When the consumers move online, companies follow. A lot of companies are making viral campaigns to support and improve their marketing strategies with notable success. However, what drives a social media marketing campaign to quickly reach large population and how a social media marketing message should be implemented to get viral are still underexplored. More specifically, the research seeks to answer the following questions; what are the motivations for individuals involved with social media messages? How do these motivations affect individuals form different attitudes toward social media messages and consequently, their forwarding behavior? Do consumer fashion traits, message traits and individual dynamic traits have any moderating effect on the aforementioned variables?

## **1.3 Purpose**

This study intends to further the understanding of consumer responses to viral marketing in social media. The increased use of social media has raised the questions of if, how, and under what circumstances will it work for marketing purposes. This research intends to add to that emerging body of research. Existing literature identifies a few groups of factors that influence viral marketing process, including: population segments and their social networks (Bampo, Ewing, Mather, Stewart, & Wallace, 2008); personal traits that motivate forwarding of the message (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006); and the features and characteristics of the campaign (Phelps, Lewis, Mobilio, Perry, & Raman, 2004; Podoshen, 2006). The purpose of this study is to understand why consumers pass on fashion viral messages. The moderating role of consumers' fashion traits, message traits and individual dynamics traits in social media are used



to explore these relationships. To fulfill research objectives, a research model is developed through integrating two theories, the use and gratification theory and elaboration likelihood theory. The intention of the study is to explore how individual's dominant motivations for using social media affect them in forming attitudes toward viral fashion marketing messages and their behavioral responses toward the messages. Whether individual dynamics and message traits shape consumer motivations and the relationship between individual's motivations and attitude toward any viral marketing message have not yet been examined.

Furthermore, fashion involvement and fashion leadership have been identified as significant individual fashion traits affecting consumers' fashion related beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral responses. However, how individuals' fashion traits shape their beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral responses in the process of getting a marketing message viral in a social media environment has not yet been fully explored.

#### **1.4 Objectives**

Using uses and gratification theory and elaboration likelihood theory/model (ELM) as theoretical guidance, a core attitudinal model is developed to examine individuals' acceptance of social media fashion marketing messages. This study tests the developed core attitudinal model as well as investigates the moderating effects of fashion consumer traits, message traits and individual dynamics on the relationship within the core attitudinal model. Research objectives include (a) identifying salient motivations of social media usage; (b) examining how motivations of social media usage relate to attitudes toward transmitting the message across fashion groups.

## 1.5 Definition of Terms

Moderating Variables	Moderating variable influences the strength of a relationship between two other variables. In this research factors and consumer traits are moderating variables of motivation and attitude towards viral message.
Fashion Leadership	The ability to sway others to accept a new fashion or style (Stone, 2004).
Fashion Leaders	Individuals who in comparison to others in the market are more involved with fashion, they are usually the first to purchase new styles, like to take risk, are confident in their choices and above all, they are influencers (Kaiser, 1990).
Fashion Followers	Individuals who are not risk takers; they wait until a new style is adopted and tested. Fashion followers have less need for variety than leaders (Solomon, 2006b).
Fashion Involvement	“The extent to which a consumer views the related fashion activities as a central part of their life”(Aron, 2004, p. 870).
Individual Dynamics in Social Media	Structural Social Capital (network size) and frequency are used to determine an individual’s dynamics.
Structural Social Capital (network size)	The size of the social media network and the frequency of contact among the fashion consumers within their social media networks.  (José-Cabezudo & Camarero-Izquierdo, 2012).
Viral Dynamics	The frequency with which fashion viral messages are opened and forwarded (José-Cabezudo & Camarero-Izquierdo, 2012).

Function Orientation	Related to utilitarian attitude dimension derived from function performed by message (Voss, Spangenberg, & Grohmann, 2003).
Affective Oriented	Related to hedonic attitude dimension derived from sensations derived from the experience of using products (Voss et al., 2003).
Motivation	The reason for behavior, an unobservable inner force that stimulates and compels a behavioral response and provides specific direction to that response.
Attitude	A learned association in memory between an object and a positive or negative evaluation of that object (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2005). Overall evaluation of the desirability of forwarding viral content electronically (Yang, Zhou, & Liu, 2012).
Intention to Forward	The subjective probability that has a consumer to undertake an activity of forwarding or recommending of products on the social media (Okazaki, 2009).
Social Media	Online social interactions and platforms where production, consumption and exchange of information take place (Marketo, 2010).
Social Networking Sites	Sites on the web that allow individuals or companies to construct a profile within a confined system; list of contacts can be added with whom they share a connection. They can also view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Communication	"Communication is a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach mutual understanding" (Rogers, 1995, p. 6).
Word of Mouth Marketing	Planned verbal technique created by marketers to influence person-to-person communications concerning a brand, a product or a service offered for sale (Arndt, 1967).
Viral Marketing Campaign	An Internet-based 'word-of-mouth' marketing technique (Woerndl, Papagiannidis, Bourlakis, & Li, 2008) "a new interpretation of the good ol word-of-mouth-paradigm" (Welker, 2002, p. 2).
Viral Marketing	"any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet"(Thorsten Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004, p. 39).
Persuasion	"Human communication that is designed to influence others by modifying their beliefs, values, or attitudes" (Simons, 1976, p. 21).
Referral Programs	Creating tools that enable satisfied customers to refer their friends.
Fashion Products	In a broad sense, fashion can be defined as "any product or service consumed as a part of a particular way of living" (Easey, 2009, p. 145). In this study, fashion products are defined more specifically as clothes and clothing-related products, such as shoes and accessories

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Preceding academic research regarding attitude theories, social media, word of mouth, viral marketing, and moderating variables of consumer fashion traits, message traits and individual dynamic traits are reviewed in this section to comprehend how viral marketing campaigns in social media function. The literature review synthesizes the current literature regarding social media use in the fashion industry and other mainline industries.

### **2.1 Background**

#### **2.1.1 Social Media and Social Media Marketing**

Social media is a phenomenon that has been sweeping across consumer culture, it is an evolving platform used by many industries including the fashion industry to generate discussion, brand recognition, and improve consumer relations through interactivity and networking. Many individuals have defined social media. Ploof (2009) simply states that social media builds platforms for firms to tell their own stories. On the other hand Marketo (2010) defines social media as online social interactions and platforms where production, consumption and information exchange take place. Similarly, Richter and Koch (2007) state that, social media is an online platform with a goal to facilitate connections, collaborations and the sharing of content. Greenberg (2010) concurs by stating that all customers are now “social customers” viewing every interaction between the company and customer as a new collaboration avenue. Ward (2010) draws a contrast between traditional media and social media, stating that the former only delivers content that does not give readers/viewers/listeners the freedom to participate in the creation or development of the content, however the later expedites conversation and facilitates building blocks. The common thread is the desire by firms to increase the sales experience and enrich relationships with their customers through social media. To sum it up, this study views

social media as a platform facilitating interactions and exchange of information between a company and its customers.

Mayfield (2008) outlined the following social media characteristics: (a) participation and engagement: users are encouraged to contribute and give feedback; (b) openness: most social media have the like and don't like options and an open link to share information; (c) conversation: the agenda of traditional media is to broadcast, social media is more so a conversation with consumers; (d) community: communities that share common interests, such as fashion, food, politics and many more easily share information with each other, and lastly, (e) connectedness: a large number of social media make use of links to other sites, resources and people, this aspect makes them thrive. Evaluating the characteristics of social media when compared to effectiveness of traditional media tools it appears social media may provide an efficient alternative for transmitting advertising messages to consumers and possible benefits for business.

Today, no company would doubt the importance of the Internet. Social media is a strategy, a tool, and way of carrying out business, many businesses have ventured in and many more are continuing to venture in. Once the best ways to communicate, advertise and market products and services are determined, social media will be very significant to how companies do business. It is paramount to note that social media complements the use of traditional media such as telephone or e-mail and does not seek to replace them (Savage, 2010). Individuals with similar needs and wants communicate, network, collaborate and share best practices via social media (Hensel & Deis, 2010). The opportunities presented by social media are tremendous. The growth of social media usage has increased exponentially; businesses have embraced social media because of the possibility to perform integrated marketing activities with much less effort

and cost than other traditional media. It is apparent that social media can have a significant impact on a brand's reputation (A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012). deInsight (2012) conducted a study that yielded the following results: 70% of consumers visited social media sites to get information; 49% of these consumers made a purchase decision based on the information they found through the social media sites; 60% said they were likely to use social media sites to pass along information to others online; and 45% of those who searched for information via social media sites engaged in word-of-mouth communication. The report indicated that firms not engaging in social media marketing are missing opportunities to reach consumers. The value of a customer goes beyond assessing how much they spend with a brand, more importantly, they pass on positive information to others and influence others to purchase the brand. In order for customers to pass on marketing messages, marketers need to feed customers information meeting their functional and hedonic needs.

Consumers are embracing social media sites, sharing their lives and keeping in touch with a great deal more people than before. For instance, in 2011 Facebook statistics indicate that on average each person has 130 friends. Consumers find that social media goes beyond updating pictures and posting status to empower them going through the flow of information (Andzulis, Panagopoulos, & Rapp, 2012). It is apparent that social media is significant in today's business environment and this has heightened interest from marketing professionals in the potential of it reaching consumers. Evidence suggests that properly executed social media marketing can take a company to new heights. For instance, Ford Motor Company by observing the influence of social media applications has at the consumer level, employed social media to promote the release of their new model Ford Focus. They created videos that were distributed on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, which had tremendous success indicated by the many strings of

comments on the videos (Levin 2011). By the same token, as part of cost saving Procter & Gamble stated that it would lay off approximately 1,600 staffers, including marketers with the claim Facebook and Google were more proficient than the traditional marketing network (Edwards, 2012).

The convenience and ease of using social media creates a following of everyday users and consumers on the social networking sites. Today large number of consumers are turning to the social media due to its convenience and the fact that it can promptly satisfy various needs such as socialization and getting information (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). According to Craig (2013) there are 1.15 billion Facebook users, 25 million Dropbox users, and 70 million Pinterest users. The popularity of social media indicates that consumers are reducing the degree of relying on traditional media and consequently consumers are listening to each other as they believe endorsement from other consumers are more credible and trustworthy than company sponsored communications (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Companies not engaging in social media as part of their online marketing strategy are missing an opportunity to reach consumers (A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012). With a significant percentage of people passing along information to others through social media, the value of one customer is worth far more than what he or she initially spends. Thus, firms and brands now need to factor in the value of customers and also the influence of social media on them.

### **2.1.2 Fashion Marketing in Social Media Environment**

The fashion industry is constantly changing due to its nature, the globalizing environment, new and more efficient technology and more demanding customers. Technology development benefits the world of fashion by attracting customers to interact with the companies. Fashion companies are involved in such things as tweeting, blogging, and



networking to participate in the current trend (A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012). At first, most of the brands were somewhat reluctant to use technology; however, the industry has come to consider technology as an opportunity rather than a threat. Unlike the first predictions, social media does not act against the positive reputation of brands (Macala Lee, 2009). Interaction with customers via social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter actually builds up friendly attention, even affection, toward fashion companies and stimulates customers' desire for products.

Social media as an emerging platform provides brand recognition and popularity for designers in the fashion industries while contributing to the interactivity between companies and consumers. The social media revolution in the fashion industry enables user-generated content to gear the conversations between designers and brands and their consumers. The emergence of social media has had widespread effects in the fashion industry in how it has created a constant dialogue and immediate feedback with people. According to Sinclair (2011), consumers are active creators and monitors in social media, and are no longer passive receivers of marketing messages. According to Papasolomou (2012), the Internet is the center of virally all communications for millions of people worldwide; it is also an inexpensive marketing tool and offers real time feedback. Social media is a means by which designers and publications can host discussions to better understand the concerns and desires of their consumers. DiMauro (2011) states that when social media tools are applied with effective marketing strategies, the fashion industry can unearth a profitable idea from consumers.

According to Agathou (2011), technology and social media has revamped public interaction and input in all facets of the fashion industry, ensuring consumers gain first row viral seats in the hottest runway shows, shop in real time and of course tweet and retweet what they consider hot. With the aforementioned in perspective, companies are challenged to embrace

social media and integrate it in their promotional mix in order to communicate and reach their target consumers. In the early days of the Internet, companies argued what its presence meant. Many approaches were used and in the end the customers determined which approaches succeeded.

The purpose of marketing is for a company to communicate with consumers and inform them of their products and services to create interest. The value a customer brings to a firm is not limited to the profit from each transaction but is the total profit the customer may provide over the duration of the relationship with the firm (V. Kumar & George, 2007). Thus, customers are seen as the intangible assets a firm should wisely acquire, maintain, and maximize just like other financial assets (Blattberg, Getz, & Thomas, 2001). Marketing involves various strategies with a primary goal of increasing sales and profitability.

### **2.1.3 WOM and Viral Marketing**

#### **Word of Mouth (WOM)**

WOM is one of the most ancient modes of trading assessments on goods and services for selling between individuals (Goyette, Ricard, Bergeron, & Marticotte, 2010). Before the advent of the printing press, broadcast media and the internet, WOM was the only way to market goods (Ferguson, 2008). At first WOM occurred mostly between neighbors exchanging information on goods found in the local shops, but as communication advanced, the complexity of this exchange of information has also advanced (Goyette et al., 2010; Whyte, 1954). WOM communication affects the success of almost any business (Gelb & Johnson, 1995). In the traditional media, marketers leveraged word of mouth, which are planned marketing techniques designed by marketing professionals to effect consumer to consumer communications regarding a brand, a product or a service offered for sale (Arndt, 1967).

The importance of WOM communication has long been a topic of considerable importance to marketing researchers and practitioners as it has significant impact on consumer choice (Arndt, 1967). Importantly, WOM has been shown in situations to be more effective than the traditional marketing tools of personal selling and various types of advertising (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008; Keller & Fay, 2012; Roshwalb, 1956).

In consumer behavior it is widely accepted that consumers' attitudes and behaviors can be shaped by WOM (Brooks Jr, 1957). Since the early 1960s WOM communication has been subject to research. Arndt (1967) looked at the informal aspect of WOM as a noncommercial communication between two people and explored aspect of information diffusion in WOM, and defined word of mouth as strategic verbal marketing technique by professionals influencing person to person communications concerning a brand, a product or a service offered for sale.

Various authors have attempted to explain the exponential multiplication effect of word of mouth. Early studies by E. Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) suggest that word-of-mouth was sevenfold more effective than print media and fourfold better than the use of a salesman and two time better than using a radio advertising. Other studies have also found word of mouth to be more effective in changing consumer attitude when compared to advertising. Morin (1983) demonstrated “other people’s recommendations” inspired more people to consider favorable more than 60 various goods and services than those subjected to advertising. These same sentiments are echoed by Duhan, Johnson, Wilcox, and Harrel (1997) when they stipulate that word-of mouth continues to be one of the most effective ways of attracting and keeping customers. When compared to advertising, word of mouth has been more effective in influencing consumer purchase and customer loyalty (Day, 1971; De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008; Keller & Fay, 2012; Roshwalb, 1956). Other studies have looked at how WOM can be used as reference a point

and how it influences consumers' purchase patterns, anticipations and pre-usage outlook of the product (Anderson & Salisbury, 2003; Rosen & Olshavsky, 1987). WOM has always influenced consumer behavior but its meaning and importance have increased tremendously with the Internet. For instance, (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Lee & Youn, 2009) show that consumers are influenced by other consumer's opinions and reviews.

### **Viral Marketing**

With advancement in technology, consumers have moved online, and strategic companies have followed them; reviving traditional word of mouth marketing through the online media. Various terms have been used to refer to this concept, they include viral marketing, word of mouse, Internet word-of-mouth, electronic WOM (viral marketing) and buzz marketing to mention but a few. In the context of this study, viral marketing is used.

In (Rayport, 1996) Jeffrey Rayport, faculty member of Harvard Business School, used the term viral marketing first in an article "The Virus Marketing." Juvertson and Draper (1997) defined the viral marketing campaign concept as "network-enhanced word of mouth" by introducing free e-mail service of Hotmail to explain the phenomenon. Other scholars have also defined viral marketing; Montgomery (2001) viewed viral marketing campaign as similar to the spread of a virus which infects its customers with the marketing message passing the message from one customer to the next like a rampant flu virus or a computer virus. Wilson (2002) further indicated it was the strategy that consisted on launching an innovative message to social networking sites that captures the user and encourages them to pass on to others, this may propel the message exposure and consequently its influence. Thorsten Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p. 38) defined the term as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and

institutions via Internet.” Phelps et al. (2004) defined viral marketing as the process of encouraging honest communication among consumer in the social networks. De Bruyn and Lilien (2008) stated that viral marketing is consumer-to-consumer (or peer-to-peer) communication, as opposed to company-to-consumer communications, whose purpose is to disseminate information about a product or a service, hence leading to its rapid and cost-effective market adoption. Kiss and Bichler (2008) define viral marketing as marketing techniques that use social networks to produce increased brand awareness through self-replicating viral diffusion of messages, analogous to the spread of pathological and computer viruses. Golan & Zaidner (2008) also stated that it is a broad array of online WOM strategies designed to encourage both online and peer-to-peer communication about a brand, product or service.

In a nut shell, viral marketing campaigns can be viewed as online marketing messages developed by companies to encourage customers to forward the message to members of their social network. Consequently these contacts are motivated to forward or transmit the message to their contacts, developing a snow balling effect to promote a company’s brand and consequently increase sales.

Viral marketing is a powerful marketing tool that may reach many customers in a short period of time (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). It normally starts with the marketer creating some form of electronic content such as text messages, e-cards, video clips, interactive flash games, games, interactive websites, images and many more with the aim of brand-building. The URL (web address) for the electronic content is made available to social media users in an appropriate communication channel to reach a target audience, after viewing the content the audience decides whether they want to pass the URL along to their friends, colleagues, somebody familiar to the message receivers or to complete strangers,. If the URL gets forwarded and the Internet

users receiving it also keep passing the URL along, the electronic content has the likelihood to reach a large group of Internet users at an exponential rate (Watts, Peretti, & Frumin, 2007). This will generate viral marketing campaign influence, which is very effective in persuading the individuals to view a given product positively. A good example is, “The Man Your Man Can Smell Like,” old Spice viral marketing campaigns that went viral in 2010. Hence it paramount for companies that intend to use viral marketing among the target audience to plan a good campaign (Grifoni, D'Andrea, & Ferri, 2013).

### **WOM vs. Viral Marketing**

Compared to traditional WOM, viral marketing is considered more influential because it is swift and convenient, and it has the one-to-many reach and the absence of face-to-face human pressure (Dobele, Toleman, & Beverland, 2005; Phelps et al., 2004). Toubia, Stephen, and Freud (2011) conducted a large scale field experiment on viral marketing campaigns effectiveness; their research findings indicated that viral marketing campaign compares favorably with print advertising. Viral marketing efforts can generally be considered a very cost-effective strategy, especially during periods of economic and financial crisis, when investments on communications are drastically reduced. In addition, online conversation usually continues to progress longer than the traditional WOM conversation, which is immediate face-to-face talk, and the message content can be changed quickly and often. It is also easier to measure viral marketing than traditional message, as consumers feedback on their favorite brands, stores, designers, looks, music and so on is archived on the social media sites (Godes & Mayzlin, 2009). As indicated, there are many advantages of using viral marketing; however, there is a continuous debate among scholars. Some question the altruistic nature of viral marketing because of the possibility of profit-motivated communicators (Steffes & Burgee, 2009), while others scholars pose that

motivation of viral marketing is not based on material interest, but rather real concern for the well-being of others, as well as their knowledge and experience (Jin & Liu, 2010). Either way, both traditional word of mouth and viral marketing will influence both the purchasing behavior and how the consumers evaluate the experience derived from the product due to the interpersonal influence found (Senecal & Nantel, 2004). Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between WOM and viral marketing.

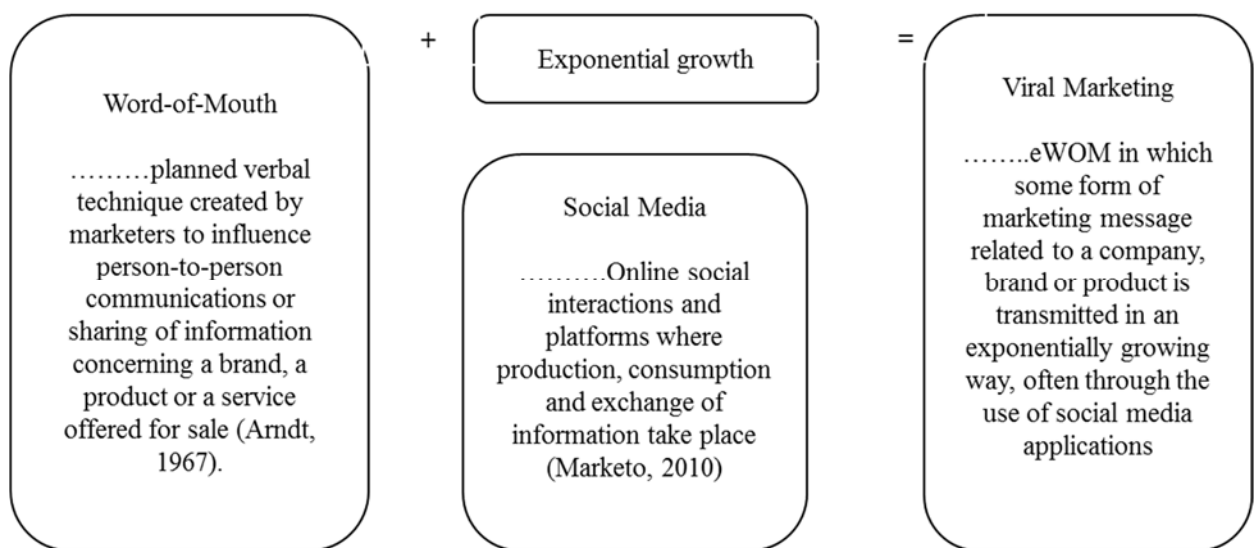


Figure 1: Relationship between Word-Of-Mouth and Viral Marketing  
Adapted from Kaplan & Haenlein (2011)

### Setting a Research Agenda

Viral marketing campaigns have gained tremendous popularity with the introduction of social media, as these outlets dramatically facilitate interconnections between companies and potential consumers (Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2006). In the online context, viral marketing has been acknowledged as an important tool that facilitates information diffusion throughout online communities (Sun, Youn, Wu, & Kuntaraporn, 2006). More than ever the business environment today has become increasingly competitive; marketers are using viral

marketing campaign as a tool to encourage consumers to take action as a result of the message. This include selecting the products, services or brands promoted, and/or passing the message to others. The goal of viral marketing campaign can be seen as twofold: consumption and forwarding behavior (Dobele, Lindgreen, Beverland, Vanhamme, & van Wijk, 2007).

Several studies have ventured in examining the viral marketing campaign effectiveness. Ferguson (2008) suggests focusing on identification of the consumer as a vital step to encourage forwarding the message. Kalpaklioglu and Toros (2011) also suggests that viral marketing techniques are powerful channels for companies to reach their target groups since they give an opportunity to spread the marketing messages very fast to a lot of people .

However, the media is cluttered with marketing messages that look alike and blur together, and in an era of time scarcity, customer loyalty is likely to decline. Schriver (1997) stated that consumers are faced with a myriad of product assortment resulting in a substantial decline of customer loyalty. Reichheld and Sasser Jr (1990) in their study indicate that if companies were able to retain five percent of their customers they could boost their profits by almost 100 percent. Gruen et al. (2006) empirically demonstrated that viral marketing has the potential to gain back customer loyalty. Viral marketing campaign can create value for business and potential consumers (Caridà & Colurcio, 2013). From the business perspective, this approach can enhance the product adoption by users (Trusov et al., 2009), and drive sales (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006).

It is all about understanding your consumer and generating a message that reaches out and touches their drive or passion point. This passion drives the message to a large pool of consumers, without the assistance of the marketer. The better the particular message content fits with the motivation of the pass-along consumer, the more likely it is to become viral (J. Y. C. Ho



& M. Dempsey, 2010). This can also turn prospects into customers, customers into brand loyalists and brand loyalists into brand advocates (deInsight, 2012).

From the customers perspective, several needs are met through viral marketing, such as social needs (Cruz & Fill, 2008), customer engagement and entertainment (Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, & Ilić, 2011). However, not all viral marketing campaigns are successful (Van der Lans, Van Bruggen, Eliashberg, & Wierenga, 2010). The vast attention that these failures get both online and offline indicate that consumers are very particular on how they want companies to communicate in social media, highlighting the need for research in this area. This need encompasses both the fundamental issues of the effectiveness of social media. To achieve the desired goals, businesses need to tailor messages to specific needs of various potential customers and consumers must relate to them (Neti, 2011).

Factors that make effective marketing message viral are still unclear to academics and to marketing professional (Godes et al., 2005) despite a substantial shift of advertising spending to viral marketing campaigns (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). Although viral marketing can be a powerful factor influencing purchasing decisions, it can be tricky for advertisers to tap into; understanding of consumer behavior patterns is always the major focus of marketing and brand managers. Good, solid facts about target customers are behind most successful merchandising decisions (Stone, 2004). Studying individuals' perceptions, lifestyles, and use of various communication channels helps understand the thinking and decision making patterns by individuals and groups (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009).

In general, this study aims to understand consumers and gain insights about their behavior and attitude towards the viral message. This will enable marketers to better interact and communicate directly with consumers and improve their marketing efforts to enhance their

business performance. Viral marketing is said to have the biggest impact on purchase decisions (Manafy, 2010). Social media is being used for viral marketing and is used by any person with computer skills and access to the Internet (Hung & Yiyang Li, 2007), hence viral marketing has become a common topic of research, particularly in the context of consumer to consumer (C2C) interactions (Libai et al., 2010). Viral marketing may not achieve the reach television advertising has now (Brenzel, 2013), but it can be used in conjunction with traditional advertising approaches to improve its impact.

In relation to fashion, the phenomenon of viral marketing has become very popular among fashion consumers and companies within recent years. Encouraging viral marketing campaigns is especially evident in fashion industry such as consumer fashion blogs (Corcoran, 2010). As the use viral marketing continues to grow, understanding the consumer fashion traits and their motivations is invaluable for fashion marketers and communicators who deal with message strategy and media outreach. Fashion consumers are active in social media pages, and produce viral marketing on social media. Fashion companies have noticed this change and want to be present in the social media in different ways. Fashion viral marketing messages must build connection between the campaign and its recipients in order to ensure that the 'virus' gets spread. If the particular message fits well with the Internet user's forwarding motivation, it is likely that it will reach a large group of Internet users (Ho & M. Dempsey, 2010). Also, Hoffman (2013) states that the message and accurate targeting of the consumers is vital when connecting and engaging with consumers on social media. In order to help fashion marketers improve the effectiveness of viral marketing, this study explores the motivations and behaviors of fashion consumers who engage in viral marketing in a social media platform.

## 2.2 Theoretical Background

In order to help fashion marketers improve the effectiveness of viral marketing campaign communications, the objective of the current study is to propose an attitudinal model for viral marketing to illustrate fashion consumers' acceptance of viral marketing messages. The research model is developed through integrating attitude theories. Elaboration likelihood theory/model (R. E. Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) examines consumer traits and how different consumers respond to fashion viral messages. Uses and gratification theory (Blumler & Katz, 1974) explores consumer motivations and how consumers choose different medias to gratify their needs. Relevant moderating factors including fashion leadership, fashion involvement, viral dynamics and structural social capital and message traits (Aron, 2004; E. C. Hirschman & Adcock, 1978; Thorsten Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

These theories stem out from general attitude models; an attitude is a “relatively enduring predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably” toward something (Simons, 1976, p. 80). For studies relating to social media, the role of attitude is paramount. It is necessary to examine the important theoretical underpinnings of attitude and evaluate the depth to which theories of attitude can help to explain and influence the relationship between the campaign and the audience. Attitude models describe marketing behavior; reflect how the information conveyed by ads is perceived, processed, and stored in individuals' memory, and how such ads impact persuasion or shifts in individuals' attitudes and behaviors (Ryffel, Wirz, Kühne, & Wirth, 2014). Attitude can also be defined as a long-term evaluation of an attitude object ( $A_0$ ). An attitude is composed of affect, behavior, and cognition also known as ABC model (Solomon, 2006a). Affect is associated with feelings toward the  $A_0$ . Behavior refers to what the consumer plans to do about the attitude object ( $A_0$ ) and cognition refers to consumers beliefs about the attitude

object ( $A_0$ ). Attitude models reflect the important connection between feeling, doing and knowing. Attitudes are presumed to influence behavior. Attitude is an important concept that is often used to understand and predict people's reaction to an object or change and how behavior can be influenced (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Because of the complexity of attitudes, numerous models have been developed to examine and understand them. Attitude theories assume that an individual will evaluate an object depending on their beliefs. Below two theories and related literature are reviewed. These theories are used to focus on consumer motivations and actions once they receive viral messages and add to the research on social media marketing by examining why consumers react to the message. The findings have implications for the ability of social media to retain users.

### **2.2.1 The Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G Theory)**

The uses and gratifications theory is one attitude theory that focuses on interactive communication. This theory has been used extensively to understand motivations for using new media. U&G theory focuses on individual use and choice of media (Blumler & Katz, 1974), it views persons as purposive and active, specifying that people select media based on needs. It asks why people attend to media content and what they get from it. Previous studies applying U&G theory have found that motivations influence individual behavioral intention through attitude (Chang & Zhu, 2011; Zhu & Chang, 2014). Thus, Motivations are the key to understanding behavior (Cooper, Powers, & Shapiro, 1998). It appears consumer needs and motivations induce the message virility (Jensen, 2011). Blumler and Katz (1974) propose that when individuals face media choices, they choose a media that gratifies their needs the best. Although so many needs have been examined, research suggest that people use various media for core needs such as getting information, being entertained or interacting with others socially

(Ang, 1995). As indicated by Ko, Cho, & Roberts (2005), uses and gratifications theory is generally accepted and has been used in various research studies to understand different media ranging from newspapers to the internet. Today, the appearance of computer-mediated communication has brought about the significance of uses and gratifications. Once a new technology enters the stage of mass communication, this theory could be used to investigate the effectiveness of the media in fulfilling individual needs (Elliott & Rosenberg, 1987).

Researchers have argued that fashion behaviors are deeply rooted in emotional and psychological motivations (Leisa Reinecke Flynn, 1992; Leisa Reinecke Flynn et al., 1996; Goldsmith, Flynn, & Moore, 1996). Uncovering the mechanisms of the complex emotional and psychological motivations behind fashion behaviors can advance our understanding of fashion leadership (Goldsmith et al., 1996). Understanding what motivations drive fashion consumer behaviors will enable marketers to send effective marketing messages that can satisfy targeted or desired motivations and thus influence forwarding behaviors. This study anticipates that the content of the fashion viral marketing campaigns may likely encourage transmission. It is also anticipated that consumers may vary in their motivations to pass on fashion viral marketing campaigns.

While past research using U&G theory has found a relationship between motivations and individual response, little is known about this relationship in the context of fashion consumers. Given the notion that different motivations among fashion followers and leaders may result in different continuance intention, the present study employs the U&G theory in order to understand what motivates fashion followers and leaders to use viral marketing and the gratifications received from ongoing use. This study also seeks to understand to what extent fashion leaders and follower seem to exhibit patterns of differences in their motivations for using

viral marketing. Given the conceptual closeness of viral marketing and traditional WOM communication, consumer motives that have been identified in the literature as being relevant for traditional WOM also can be expected to be of relevance for viral marketing (Thorsten Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Dichter (1966) identified four main motivational categories of positive WOM communication: product-involvement, self-involvement, other-involvement, and message-involvement. Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1993) modified Dichter's typology, renaming the categories and introducing an additional dissonance reduction motive, which they see as a reason for articulating negative WOM communication only. The most comprehensive study on motives for WOM communication to date is by Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster (1998). Carrying out 390 interviews, they identified eight motives for consumer WOM communication, several of which correspond with categories originally suggested by Dichter (1966). Four of the identified motives explain positive WOM communication (i.e., altruism, product involvement, self-enhancement, and helping the company) while the other four motives give reasons for negative WOM communication (i.e., altruism, anxiety reduction, vengeance, and advice seeking). When media and content are matched to motivation, marketers can better meet consumer needs and interests. Individual dynamic traits influence both general habits of media use and also attitudes and expectations about the benefits offered by the media, which determine media choice and consumption (Blumler & Katz, 1974).

### **2.2.2 Elaboration Likelihood Model/Theory (ELM Theory)**

Elaboration likelihood theory/model is also an attitude theory that focuses on interactive communication. It is a persuasion model that attempts to explain how the attitude of a receiver can be changed by a persuasive message (Moore, (2001 Fall)). People have all levels of involvement with messages; some are highly involved while others have almost no interest in

what the communicator is trying to convey (Cacioppo, Petty, Kao, & Rodriguez, 1986). The goal of any communication is to inform, remind and persuade, otherwise it will defeat its purpose. Persuasion is a human communication that is designed to influence others by modifying their beliefs, values or attitudes (Simons, 1976). ELM states that there are two routes through which persuasive messages are processed; the central and peripheral. The belief is that the producer of the messages could use either one of the routes to better target a message to an audience.

Consumers who use the central route use a lot of cognition; the ideas and content of the message must be very thoughtful because the receiver is highly involved. A consumer is highly involved because they care about the product and will therefore dissect and scrutinize the message (Benoit et al., 2001). Messages using this route must be straightforward and strong. For instance, a consumer using this route will analyze and scrutinize the content of the message to see what it means. There are two advantages to the marketers of using the central route in change of attitude, which tends to last longer, and the central route is more likely to predict behavior (Scott, 1996). Attitudes formed through this route result from wealth of information, rational arguments, and evidence to support a particular conclusion (Dainton & Zelle, 2005). Centrally routed messages are much more likely to create long-term change for the recipient than are peripheral messages; however, not all individuals are capable of receiving centrally routed messages.

Importantly, ELM argues that centrally routed messages succeed in long-term change only when two factors are met: (a) the target must be highly motivated to process all of the information being given, and (b) the target must be able to process the message cognitively. Central or elaborated messages are ineffective when targeted participants are not capable and interested in the information (R. E. Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Although the persuader might

prefer an involved audience so as to produce enduring change, it is unreasonable to expect every persuasive target to be motivated or skilled enough to understand the barrage of influential messages put forth each day. As a result, when motivation or ability is missing from the target audience, the persuader can use the peripheral route to persuasion. Users of the peripheral route do not process the message cognitively but are impacted by other factors such as social pressure (Moore, (2001 Fall)). For instance, if everyone is purchasing a certain brand, the peripheral route user will care less about the content but will be influenced by what others are buying. Thus, ELM predicts that when the audience is unmotivated or unable to process an elaborated message, persuaders should focus on quick and easy ways to produce change (Dainton & Zelley, 2005).

Although the attitude change may be temporary, it could be enough to encourage action. The consumer would then have some more experience with the object of the message. Then, later, when the message is repeated, it may have a better chance of surviving through the central route and change attitudes permanently. For example: a student needs a new pair of jeans. She sees a Levi viral marketing campaigns on YouTube with peers looking cool and having fun in their new pair of jeans. The campaign touts a few benefits but for the most part it is full of appealing visuals. The student is then peripherally motivated to buy a pair of jeans. After the purchase the student discovers that the pair of jean is not only trendy but of good quality too. The student comes to respect the brand in general. The next time she sees the campaign she will be more motivated to listen to the message and reinforce the positive opinions of Levi jeans since she will have had some practical experience with the brand.

ELM peripheral route seeks to use different cues to target those who are unable or unwilling to process centrally routed messages. These messages often seek to target the audiences by way of using an emotional appeal. Authority, commitment, contrast, liking,



reciprocity, scarcity, and social proof are seven cues that signal the use of a peripheral message which were identified by (Cialdini, 2006). Using authority as a peripheral cue, the persuader uses the perception of authority to convince the audience to accept the beliefs or behaviors presented. For instance, parents often use this peripheral cue with their children: “do your homework or you will not go to the zoo!” Peripheral messages that rely on commitment emphasize a person’s dedication to a product, social cause, group affiliation, political party, and so on (Cialdini, 2006). One very common sequential procedure that underscores the commitment principle is the foot-in-the-door tactic, where you accept to do one little thing at a time.

Persuading through contrast or using contrast effects requires the communicator to set up uneven points of comparison. For instance a marketer would reduce prices or show the customer the most expensive item first making everything else appear cheaper. Liking messages stress affinity toward a person, place, or object, that is, if we like you, we will like your ideas. For instance by using Julia Roberts to sell Ann Taylor’s pants, Ann Taylor expect that if you as a consumer you like Julia Roberts, you will also like their product and hopefully buy it.

Reciprocation cues try to influence by emphasizing a give and take relationship. Marketers use this by giving freebies. For instance if you buy these shapers in the next 10 minutes we will give you one free. Similarly, scarcity is a peripheral cue that preys on individual’s worry of missing out on something. Get this before they are all gone! Finally, the peripheral cue of social proof is based on the long-standing notion of peer pressure (Dainton & Zelle, 2005). For example everyone is getting plaid pants this season and in the worry of being left out, you end up getting one.

Each route targets a widely different audience; ELM emphasizes the importance of understanding audience members before creating a persuasive message. ELM depicts persuasion

as a process in which the success of influence depends largely on the way the receivers make sense of the message (Dainton & Zelley, 2005; Phelps et al., 2004). This study stresses the importance of understanding the motivation that fashion leaders and followers have by using social media. To accomplish this, motivations will be identified based on viral marketing motivation and therefore establish what routes each of the fashion groups use. Subramani & Rajagopalan (2003) argue that consumers have different psychological effect created by different types of viral marketing campaign initiatives. These effects can also be observed from individual's intention to share information that contributes to the benefits of viral marketing campaign (Smith, Coyle, Lightfoot, & Scott, 2007). The success of a viral marketing campaigns hinges on the ability of a marketer to understand and profile their customers. When a marketer is able to generate content that meets the need of a user, the user is more likely to process the content that helps them to make the decision (Kar Yan & Shuk Ying, 2005). Hence, if advertisers are to accomplish viral marketing campaign goals they will need to understand which consumers are most likely to pass messages along and why understanding the motivations, attitudes, and behaviors of those receiving and passing along email messages is necessary to implement effective viral marketing campaign.

### **2.3. Conceptual Framework**

The research reviewed above has yielded a number of factors that may influence the intention to forward fashion viral marketing messages. A conceptual framework (Figure 2) based on the review of literature is presented below. It integrates attitude theories, proposing that the relationship is moderated by individual dynamic traits, message traits and consumer fashion traits. The conceptual framework shows the variables included and the ensuing hypotheses.

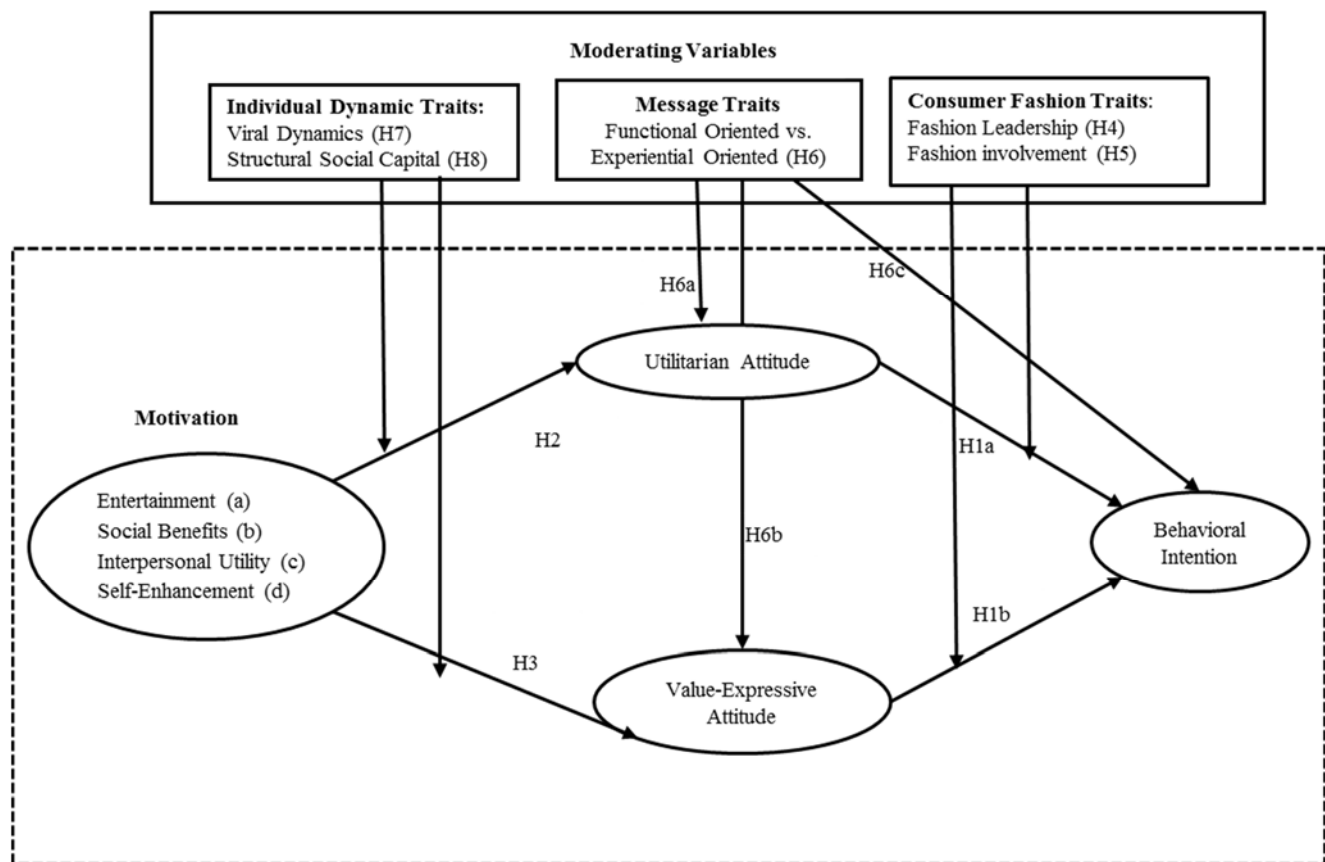


Figure 2: An Attitudinal Model of Viral Marketing Acceptance: Moderating Effects of Consumer Fashion Traits, Message Traits and Individual Dynamic Traits

## 2.4 Hypothesis Development

### 2.4.1 Intention to Forward Fashion Viral Messages

Behavioral intention can be defined as a measure of the likelihood that a person will engage in a given behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980 ). Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior and relates to attitude and preference toward a brand or a product (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Kim, Kim & Johnson, 2010; C. Kim, Lee, & Tomiuk, 2009); C. Kim, Lee, & Tomiuk, 2009; Lloyd, Yip, & Luk, 2011). Measuring intention assumes consumers' future behavior based on their attitudes. Purchase intention is an attitudinal variable for measuring customers' future contributions to a brand. Intention to forward fashion

viral messages is the dependent variable in this study, which is the behavior for fashion consumers to engage in viral marketing communication on social media. The focus of this study is the forwarding of fashion viral messages on social media, which can take the form of sharing of links, photos, and videos on the profile of the consumers in the different social media sites. The intention to forward can be presented as the subjective probability that has a fashion leader or follower to undertake an activity of forwarding a message or recommending of products on the social media (Okazaki, 2009). Generally, literature suggests that consumers are more likely to pass along a message if they are motivated to do so (Yang & Zhou, 2011). Only by understanding these motivations and behaviors can marketers hope to tap effectively into this rich base of consumers (Phelps et al., 2004).

Assumptions can be made about social media, as a new invention, and the fact that consumers are rushing to these environments with various motivations. Previous research suggests that if a media is perceived as one that fulfills the needs of its users it can motivate them to use the media more frequently (Alwitt & Prabhaker, 1992). It seems reasonable to expect that if motivations are met then the attitude towards the social media will be positive and hence the possibility of sharing the message.

#### **2.4.2 Attitude to toward Fashion Viral Messages**

Scholars are constantly seeking a richer understanding of consumer attitudes (Voss et al., 2003). Attitudes can be defined as an overall positive or negative evaluation of a product or service. Batra & Ahtola (1990) stated that there are two basic reasons why consumers purchase goods and services and perform consumption behaviors, they include: (1) consummatory affective (hedonic) gratification (from sensory attributes), and (2) instrumental, utilitarian reasons. I adopt this two-dimensional conceptualization of consumer attitudes: The first

dimension is a hedonic dimension resulting from sensations derived from the experience of watching a viral fashion message and the second is a utilitarian dimension derived from functions performed by products. Measures of attitudinal dimensions provide building blocks for researchers attempting to develop models that explain a greater proportion of the variance in consumer behavior when dealing with viral marketing campaigns. This reflects back to Elaboration Likelihood Model, which states that there are two routes through which persuasive messages are processed, the central and peripheral. The belief is that the producer of the messages could use either one of the routes to better target a message to an audience. ELM posits that, individuals will process the message differently depending on the level of involvement; therefore, to reach an audience, it is important that the message content motivates various audiences.

Attitudinal research (Dabholkar & Bagozzi, 2002; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) proposes that attitudes have a strong, direct and positive effect on intentions. For instance, (Chen & Wells, 1999) found that positive consumer attitude towards a site is a major indicator of web effectiveness. MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch (1986) also suggest that attitude toward a site directly affects attitude toward the brand, which exerts a direct influence on purchase.

Viral messages are shared between friends and peers rather than controlled by an advertiser. Hence, they are less intrusive and are perceived more positively by consumers. The users' attitude and willingness to share content with peers may be influenced by the content of the message. It is reasonable to assume that a positive attitude towards the viral message might consequently lead to forwarding of the message. This positivity may consequently lead not only to passing along the message but also purchases of the product.

Based on the above, it is hypothesized that:

*H1: Individual's stronger favorable (a) utilitarian attitude (b) value-expressive attitude towards a social media marketing message will lead to higher intentions to forward the message.*

### **2.4.3 Motivations to Forward Viral Message**

Social influence is mentioned as one of the main drivers of WOM communication (e.g. (Thorsten Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004)). People communicate because they get something in return, which is considered as valuable. By understanding motivations and behaviors of consumer, marketers can hope to tap effectively into a rich base. Phelps et al. (2004) used both qualitative (i.e. focus group and interview) and quantitative (i.e. content analysis) methods to explore consumers' motives to pass along messages via email. Their results illustrated the importance of selecting targets who will find the advertiser's information relevant enough to forward the email; they emphasized the importance of understanding consumers well enough to create interesting, relevant messages to consumers' interests and needs. Huang, Lin, and Lin (2009) integrated the social capital and social cognitive theories and investigated factors affecting pass-along email intentions. The results of the study indicated that factors such as message involvement, social interaction tie, affection outcome expectations and message passing self-efficacy exert significant influences on email forwarding intentions. (J. Y. C. Ho & M. Dempsey (2010) used Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO) theory and examined motives to pass along content online in general. They identified the following needs as potential motivations to forward online content: part of a group, individualistic, altruistic, and personal growth. Results from the study indicated that Internet users, who are more individualistic and/or more altruistic, tend to forward more online content than others. I therefore argue that the key driver in fashion viral marketing campaigns is the content effectiveness that

create awareness, trigger interest, and motivates forwarding and adoption. The following motivations will be investigated to see whether fashion leaders and followers differ in their motivations to share viral messages; self-enhancement, social benefit, entertainment and information.

*'Self-Enhancement'* also named *'Self-Involvement'* is the other variable identified by Dichter (1966) and Sundaram et al. (1998). After experiencing a product, consumers normally seek validation from others. Dichter (1966) states that this kind of validation is often done with different goals, some people start engaging in WOM in order to gain attention of others or to demonstrate their knowledge. This can demonstrate power over the listener and thus a leadership role (Dichter, 1966). Others engage in WOM in order to gain a different social status in the receivers' eyes or to seek confirmation of the own product judgment (Dichter, 1966). Sundaram et al. (1998) and Thorsten Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) confirmed a positive relationship between Self-Involvement and WOM communication. According to Engel et al. (1993), this motivation to self-enhancement is driven by the desire to be recognized by others positively while in viral marketing the motivation may be viewed as a desire to be considered by others as savvy and informed (Thorsten Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Other studies interchangeably refer to self enhancement as self-construal (Fiske, 2001; Goffman, 1959; Brown & Gallagher, 1992). From the above discussion it is evident that viral marketing is influenced by the need to gain attention of others or to demonstrate a leadership role.

People are social beings (Qualman, 2009), and it is in their nature to share experiences and interact with each other with regard to product choice (Gladwell, 2000). The use of social media via social network can also be a *'social benefit'* for people, as they might feel a sense of belonging and integration (McWilliam, 2000). Thus it can be assumed that social media users

engage in viral marketing communication in order to belong to a network or simply to strengthen their network integration (Thorsten Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Research indicates that consumers are influenced by their peers (J.-H. Huang & Chen, 2006). Due to peer influence, individuals who initially reject a product may accept it later because it has become accepted among peers (Smith et al., 2007). Following the above discussion it is evident that individuals engage in viral marketing communication in search of ‘social benefits’, which they receive from being members of a social network.

The ‘*entertainment*’ construct refers to the extent to which the web media is fun and entertaining to media users (Eighmey, 1997; Eighmey & McCord, 1998). ‘*Interpersonal Utility*’ refers to the use media to satisfy social interaction, affection, and other interpersonal needs (Shaojing, 2008). Interpersonal utility impacts consumer attitude towards messages as it influences them in making purchase decisions (Tsang, Shu-Chun, & Ting-Peng, 2004), it is therefore an important factor in determining the effectiveness of commercials (Zernigah & Sohail, 2012). Interpersonal utility is considered as a valuable incentive in viral marketing and recipients may react positively to the messages to meet this need. There is a positive association between ad and interpersonal utility (Zernigah & Sohail, 2012). Because WOM motives encompass both interpersonal and media motives, it is legitimate to argue that those antecedent factors impact motives to use viral marketing.

Based on the above, it is hypothesized that:

*H2: Individuals’ (a) entertainment, (b) social benefits, (c) self-enhancement, (d) interpersonal utility, motivation will lead to positive utilitarian attitudes towards a fashion social media marketing message.*



*H3: Individuals' (a) entertainment, (b) social benefits, (c) self-enhancement, (d) interpersonal utility, motivation will lead to positive value-expressive attitudes towards a fashion social media marketing message.*

#### **2.4.4 Moderating Effects**

The moderating effects on the relationship within the model are discussed next (see Figure 2). Individual dynamic traits, message traits and consumer fashion traits are used as moderating variables.

##### **Consumer Fashion Traits**

###### ***Fashion Leadership***

This study focuses on finding out if there are any differences in the preferences towards the content of fashion viral marketing campaign among fashion leaders and followers. This section presents literature that draws a clear distinction between fashion leaders and followers. The fashion cycle comprised of five phases (introduction, rise, acceptance, decline, and finally rejection of a fashion) these phases can further be categorized into three stages; the innovation stage, culmination stage and decline stage (Stone, 2004). In the innovation stage fashion leaders adopt the new innovation, which is later adopted by the followers in the culmination and decline stage. Many scholars have addressed leaders and followers. Kaiser (1990) refers to leaders as individuals who in comparison to others in the market are more involved with fashion, they are usually the first to purchase new styles, like to take risk, are confident in their choices and above all, they are influencers. On the other hand, followers are individuals who are not risk takers; they wait until a new style is adopted and tested, however, they play a significant role in ensuring the continued success of the fashion industry (Stone, 2004). Painter and Pinegar's (1971) findings also indicated that a fashion leader is more inner-directed than a follower. They are also risk

takers because they are among the first to buy products and therefore reduce the risk for the fashion followers indicating that they are more socially secure than followers.

Stone (2004) in her book *The Dynamics of Fashion* uses three theories of fashion that were also used by Georg (1904); The trickle-down/ the downward-flow theory, trickle-across/horizontal-flow theory, or trickle-up/upward-flow theory each having its own set of fashion leaders and followers. In the trickle-down/ the downward-flow theory, fashion leaders are typically individuals who possess wealth such as celebrities and political leaders and have access to media and therefore their fashion style is visible and replicated. In the trickle-across/horizontal-flow theory, fashion leaders are individuals within a subculture who have personal prestige that enables them to be leaders with that particular group. Fashion leaders in the trickle-up/upward-flow theory are often young members of lower economic groups whose fashion trends inspire other economic groups, usually of greater wealth and status. In the three theories it is evident that fashion leaders lead the way in adopting a new fashion and set the trend for fashion followers.

Rogers (1995) also addressed the concept of fashion leaders and followers. In his theory of diffusion of innovations he classified individuals as innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, or laggards. The distinction among these groups is based on their fashion innovativeness and fashion opinion leadership. There is a constant search and debate on the differences between fashion innovativeness and fashion opinion leadership. Some studies indicate a clear distinction while others overlap. For instance, Beaudoin et al. (2000) state that fashion opinion leaders adopt styles and also use word of mouth to influence others. On the other hand, innovators adopt styles without making an effort to influence others. Rogers and Cartano (1962) concurred by defining opinion leaders as individuals who have high influence on the

decisions of others because they are believed to have knowledge and who are considered as appropriate sources for information and advice. Aside from innovativeness, Rogers stated that opinion leadership as one of important determinants of consumer groups and defined it as the ability of a person to influence others. Rogers suggested that there is an association between adopters and both fashion innovativeness and fashion opinion leadership.

Demographically and psychologically, fashion opinion leaders, fashion innovators and, innovative communicators are similar and can be referred to as leaders. Behling (1992) reviewed twenty fashion adoption research studies spanning thirty-five years; these studies indicated no clear distinction between such labels as, fashion leader, fashion innovator, innovative communicator or early adopter. Hence many studies classify consumer groups into leaders and followers. Fashion leaders are sometimes referred to as influential as they often are able to influence the attitudes and behavior of others (Solomon, 2006a). Fashion leaders are significant to marketers because they possess a number of characteristics; they have expert power and knowledge (Leonard-Barton, 1985), are socially active and highly interconnected in their community and therefore have power due to their social standing (Venkatraman, 1989), though they want to stand out from the group they have similar values with the rest of the group so that they can act as a reference (Rogers, 1995).

Hirschman and Adcock divide fashion consumers into four groups: followers/general population (have no score in either fashion innovativeness or opinion leadership), innovators (score high on innovativeness, but not on opinion leadership), opinion leaders (score high on opinion leadership, but not on innovativeness) and innovative communicators (rank highly on both innovativeness and opinion leadership). However, Hirschman and Adcock narrowed these groups into two; fashion leaders (innovators, opinion leaders and innovative communicators) and

fashion followers. Various studies have used Hirschman and Adcock's leadership scale, for instance, Studak and Workman (2006) analyzed the levels of leadership among fashion consumer groups, according to demographic characteristics, their findings indicate that hedonic, pleasure focused, or utilitarian, action focused, approaches to fashion are influenced by their group and gender. This research is consistent with other studies on fashion consumer groups that have found significant differences in the ways various fashion consumer groups respond to fashion and other cultural influences (Summers, 1970, 1972; Workman & Studak, 2006).

It is therefore hypothesize that;

*H4: The salience of the path between (a) utilitarian attitudes (b) value-expressive attitudes and intention to forward a fashion social media marketing messages will be different across groups of fashion leaders and fashion followers.*

### ***Fashion Involvement***

Apart from examining fashion leadership, it is also relevant and important to examine fashion involvement. Involvement is a good measure that can be used to examine consumer behavior and segmenting consumer markets (Eun Joo et al., 2006) . Aron (2004) described involvement is the motivational state of arousal or interest evoked by a particular stimulus or situation, and displayed through properties of drive. Overall, involvement is theorized as the interaction between a consumer and product.

In fashion marketing, fashion involvement refers to the extent of interest with the fashion product category (e.g. clothing). Fashion involvement is used primarily to predict behavioral variables related to apparel products such as product involvement, buying behavior, and consumer characteristics (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997; Fairhurst et al., 1989; Leisa R. Flynn & Goldsmith, 1993). For example, O'Cass (2004) found fashion clothing involvement related

highly to personal characteristics (i.e. female and younger) and fashion knowledge, which in turn influenced consumer confidence in making purchase decisions. Also, the positive relationship between the level of fashion involvement and purchasing apparel (Leisa R. Flynn & Goldsmith, 1993)& Seo et al., 2001) suggested consumers with high fashion involvement were more likely to be apparel buyers. As stated earlier fashion leaders have historically been important to fashion researchers and marketers, because they are seen as the drivers and influentials in the fashion adoption process (Goldsmith, Moore, & Beaudoin, 1999). However, because fashion clothing means different things to different people, consumers' form differing attachments to it, understanding consumers varying attachments, how they form, are maintained and are influenced is of interest researchers and marketers alike. Therefore, it is assumed that consumers with higher fashion involvement were more likely to engage in forwarding fashion viral messages.

In relation to viral marketing, Dichter (1966) in his study investigated the motivations why people engage in WOM communication. In his analysis he identified four main categories that make people engage in WOM communication, which include 'Product-Involvement', 'Self-Involvement', 'Other-Involvement' and 'Message-Involvement'. In further analysis he indicated that these four categories were not mutually exclusive but were frequently overlapping or combined. Among the four, 'Product-Involvement' was found to have the strongest influence on WOM behavior. He stated that when people are involved with the product, they talk about their product ownership, the joy in the product or simply the product discovery. Richins and Root-Shaffer (1988) and Sundaram et al. (1998) expanded Dichter study, their findings indicated a strong and positive relationship between 'Involvement' and 'WOM Communication'. Okazaki (2009) in his study on mobile marketing demonstrated that the product involvement positively

influenced the attitude toward participation in a firms' campaign and the intention to recommend the product.

Based on the above, it is hypothesized that:

*H5: The salience of the path between (a) utilitarian attitude (b) value-expressive attitude and (c) intention to forward a fashion social media marketing messages will be different across groups with high fashion involvement and low fashion involvements.*

### **Message Orientation**

The functional theory of attitudes explores the impact perception of fashion viral messages. Perceived fun and usefulness of a message are identified as message traits (Cialdini, 2006). Katz (1960) developed functional theory of attitudes, which explains that all attitudes have some functions, most attitudes have more than one function but one dominates. These functions include, utilitarian function, which is based on benefits the consumer gets upon using the product. Research related to utilitarian and hedonic dimensions are mostly concentrated on products and brands, this research focuses on hedonic and utilitarian ad attributes, and on how these are linked to overall viral marketing effectiveness. There are two fundamental reasons that consumption may occur affective (hedonic) and functional (utilitarian) features (Batra & Ahtola, 1991; Voss et al., 2003).

Johar and Sirgy (1991) suggested that there are two routes to persuasion: self-congruity and functional congruity. When products are value-expressive, consumer attitudes are argued to be best influenced through self-congruity, while utilitarian products require functional congruity (Johar & Sirgy, 1991). Persuasion through self-congruity appears when there is a match between the consumer's actual self-image and the product's hedonic attributes and cues. Functional congruity, in turn, links the product's performance-related functions to the consumer's ideal

attributes and criteria toward the same object. Similarly, Petty, Cacioppo & Heesacker (1981) in their Elaboration Likelihood Model in relation to consumer involvement and persuasion. Since self-congruity focuses on product cues, it can be viewed as the peripheral route to persuasion (Johar & Sirgy, 1991; R. E. Petty, Cacioppo, J. T., and Heesacker, M, 1981). Functional congruity can be regarded as the central route to persuasion, as message content and quality of arguments are processed in greater detail. These notions of congruity can be directly linked to viral marketing and give an insight into what type of messages would be the most persuasive.

*H6: Individuals (a) utilitarian attitude and (b) value-expressive attitude, and (c) intention to forward a social media marketing message are different when they view functional oriented and experiential oriented social media marketing message.*

## **Individual Dynamics Traits**

### ***Viral Dynamics***

People that spend much time on social media, engage in many activities. Nowadays, when surfing any social media platform, it is almost impossible to avoid sites that incorporate the referral tool such as share on Facebook, email, tell a friend, and tweet. Frequency of contact and communication with the network are reflected in the intensity of social media use. Individuals who use social media as a means of communication more often and more intensely are also more likely to open or forward the viral messages they receive. As Ho & Dempsey (2010) indicate, consumption of online content will positively affect forwarding behavior. The longer individuals spend online (in our case, using social media), the more likely they are to open and forward information. The greater the number of messages that individuals open, the more likely they are to forward them. I therefore posit that in general, the success of viral marketing is measured by

the amount of forwarding it achieves. One can assume that frequent users of social media will likely use these referral tools.

Based on the above, it is hypothesized that:

*H7: The salience of the path between individuals' motivation for using social media and their (a) utilitarian attitudes, and (b) value-expressive attitudes will be different cross groups with high and low viral dynamics.*

#### ***Structural Social Capital (Network Size)***

Structural Social Capital are connections between individuals of a social group comprising information channels allowing people to exchange information or knowledge; it influences the extent to which interpersonal knowledge sharing occurs (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In social media communication, individuals create networks through their contacts, and in these networks, social capital emerges. Structural social capital can be characterized by the size of the network and the frequency of contact among the individuals (Huang et al., 2009). The size of an individual's network or the number of contacts they maintain determines the flow of information they send. Concerning this point, and for the case of a social network, Smith et al. (2007) state that there is a positive relation between the number of contacts the individual has and the amount of contributed content. Network size and structure have been linked to the likelihood that individuals will take part therein, an issue explored in studies such as (Steyer, Garcia-Bardidia, & Quester, 2007). Based on the above, it is hypothesized that:

*H8: The salience of the path between individuals' motivation for using social media and their (a) utilitarian attitudes, and (b) value-expressive attitudes will be different cross groups with high and low structural social capital.*



## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

To empirically test the research hypotheses and proposed research model, an online survey was developed to collect cross-sectional individual responses. Included measures were adopted or adapted from previous research. A convenience sample was recruited from two major universities in the southeastern region in the United States. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software. Validity and reliability of research scales were assessed. Hypothesized causal relationships and moderating effects were tested using two-step structural equation modeling approach.

### **3.1 Research Design**

This research explores the underlying reasons for individuals' different responses toward a social media marketing messages. The targeted population is online social media users. It is easier to reach this group through using online tools. Therefore, a web-based survey was developed using qualtrics.com. The first part is the cover page including a consent form to inform participants that all the responses will be anonymous and only aggregate results will be released as research results and findings. In addition, incentive information is included in this part. Specifically, participants can choose to enter a lottery drawing to win one of the five \$20 Walmart gift cards.

The second part of the survey includes eight self-developed items assessing social media sites usage, nine items adopted from José-Cabezudo and Camarero-Izquierdo (2012) to measured social media traits (viral dynamics and structural social capital). Six items adapted from Hirschman, & Adcock (1987) to measure fashion leadership, and seven item scales adopted from Aron (2004) to measure fashion clothing involvement. The third part included a 36-item inventory adapted from Korgagaonkar & Wolin (1999), Lin (1999) and José-Cabezudo and

Camarero-Izquierdo (2012) to assess the degree of motivation to process viral message for using social media including entertainment, social benefits, self-enhancement, and interpersonal utility.

Part four focuses on attitudes and responses toward specific fashion related viral messages. Participants were provided a link to a social media marketing video. This part had two versions with one group of participants viewing an experiential oriented video and the other group viewing a functional oriented video to provide their attitudes toward these marketing messages. Guided by the Elaboration Likelihood Model and the review of related literature, it is propose that institutional/experiential marketing messages with a focus on brand image and brand experiences requires higher ability and motivations for individuals to process and hence are more likely to drive an individual to go down a “central route to persuasion”. A marketing message that provides specific and functional information requires less ability to process and may trigger a “peripheral route to persuasion” process. Two fashion related video clips were selected by a group of fashion major students and scholars with related expertise with one identified as institutional/experiential oriented message the other one identified as functional oriented message to be included into research instrument.

After subjects watched the video clip, they provided responses to the questions assessing their attitudes toward the marketing video. It is conceptualized that individuals’ attitudes toward a social media fashion marketing message can include two dimensions: utilitarian attitudes and value-expressive attitudes. This is based on Katz (1960) Functional Theory of Attitudes, which proposes any given attitude held by any given individual serves one or more attitude functions such as utilitarian function, and value-expressive function. Therefore, 13 items adapted from Hsieh, Hsieh, and Tang (2012) are included in this section to assess two dimensions of individual

attitudes toward a social media fashion marketing message. The last part of the survey collects participants' general demographic information.

### **3.2 Research Instrument**

A comprehensive review of literature was conducted to search for quality measurement for the research constructs in the proposed attitudinal model, including intention to forward social media fashion marketing message, two dimensional attitudes (utilitarian and value-expressive attitude) toward a social media marketing message, motivations of using social media, two dimensions of consumer fashion traits (fashion leadership, and fashion involvement), two dimensions of consumer social media traits (individual viral dynamics, and structural social capital). Table 1 provides an overview of research constructs and measures.

Four items were adapted from viral marketing campaigns (Hung-Chang, Yi-Ching, Ya-Hui, & Lee, 2007) to measure participants' willingness to pass along the message by determining their intentions to forward the message including "I will share this video with my friends through the Internet." Participants rated their agreement with the items five point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Attitude toward viral fashion message was adopted from Hsieh, Hsieh, & Tang (2012) and used to assess how favorably the research participants perceived the message, such as "This video is pleasant." the measures have been rigorously tested by different researchers for reliability and validity and it has been found appropriate for this research.

Table 1: Measurement and Its Source

Construct	Variable Type	Instrument Source (adopted/adapted)	Type of Scores Produced
Intention to forward a social media fashion marketing message (ITF)	Dependent Variable	Hsieh et al. (2012)	4-item scale assessing five-point Likert-type (strongly agree/disagree)
Attitudes toward a social media fashion marketing message (ATT)	Mediating Variables	Hsieh et al. (2012)	13-item scale assessing five-point Likert-type (strongly agree/disagree)
Motivations of using social media(MOU)	Exogenous Variables	José-Cabezudo (2012) and Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler (2004)	23-item scale assessing five-point Likert-type (strongly agree/disagree)
Fashion Leadership (FL)	Moderating Variable	Hirschman & Adcock, (1978)	6-item scale assessing five-point Likert-type (strongly agree/disagree)
Fashion involvement (FIN)	Moderating Variable	Aron (2004)	7-item scale assessing five-point Likert-type (strongly agree/disagree)
Functional vs. Experiential Oriented	Moderating Variable	Hsieh et al. (2012)	4-item scale assessing five-point Likert-type (strongly agree/disagree)
Individual Viral Dynamics (VD)	Moderating Variable	José-Cabezudo (2012)	4-item scale assessing time framework
Individual Structural Social Capital (SSC)	Moderating Variable	José-Cabezudo (2012)	5-item scale assessing network size

For motivation, four dimensions (i.e. entertainment, social benefits, self-enhancement, and interpersonal utility) were identified and included in the study. Therefore, motivation was assessed in terms of meeting participant's needs entertainment, social benefits, self-enhancement, and interpersonal utility. Motivation for entertainment was adopted from Lin's scale (1999), the scale is composed of seven items that appear to capture the extent to which a person uses the web for entertainment. The scale has a reliability of alpha of .88. Social benefits,

self-enhancement were adapted from the Thorsten Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) who did a rigorous study to examine viral marketing motives hence appropriate for this research.

Six items were adapted from Hirschman and Adcock (1987) to measure fashion leadership. Hirschman and Adcock developed the measure of fashion innovativeness and opinion leadership scale to classify consumers into one of the fashion consumer groups (leaders or followers). Since its development, the scale has been widely used by a variety of researchers that have found the scale to be consistent and reliable (Stanforth, 1995; Studak & Workman, 2004; Workman & Studak, 2006). Seven items were adopted from Aron (2004) to measure fashion clothing involvement, this scale has been tested rigorously and shown to be valid.

Message traits were measured using a scale adopted from Hsieh, Hsieh, & Tang (2012). These measures assessed the respondents' response to functional vs. experiential oriented message. The frequency with which individuals open and forward viral (fashion) messages was measured using three, six-position indicators, where 1 indicates "never", 2, "less than once a month", 3, "a few times a month", 4, "a few times a week", 5, "about once a day" and 6, "several times a day" (José-Cabezudo & Camarero-Izquierdo, 2012). Individual structural social capital was measured by a five-item scale indicating the number of friends in most frequently used social media account, family members in most frequently used social media account, messages received from all your social media accounts, messages forwarded from all of your social media accounts, messages created and posted using all your social media accounts every week; this was adopted from José-Cabezudo and Camarero-Izquierdo (2012).

### **3.3 Sampling and Procedure**

A pretest of the research instrument was conducted using a small sample of undergraduates enrolled at the Mississippi State University to ensure that the format, design and wording of the questions were clear and easy to understand, that the survey pages appeared correctly, and to estimate the reliability of all measures. Modifications were made based on the commentaries from the participants. Once the amendments were done a sample of college students were used; this can be held as a suitable sample, since college students are heavy social media users.

A convenience sample was recruited from two major universities in the southeastern region of the United States. College students were selected as participants to collect data for the empirical study these reasons: (1) they are likely to be involved with fashion, entertainment, and certain product categories; (2) most of college students are part of Generation Y or millennial, also referred to as the digital age; (3) they tend to be more socially conscious and be sensitive toward using social media; (4) statistics indicate that this is the largest demographic group and marketers love them because they love consumerism; (5) the millennials' are extremely comfortable with technology and wired from birth with no real memory of life without computers, cell phones, and digital music (Gartner, 2007, April 24; Seock & Bailey, 2008). Furthermore, millennials compose 24% of the United State population at 77 million, are the founders of the social media movement and are constantly connected to their social circles via online and mobile (Nielson Report, 2014).

External validity is the validity of casual inferences in scientific studies (Mitchell and Jolley, 2001). There is always a risk of making a mistake in generalizability. To increase generalizability in this research, data was collected from two large public universities; Louisiana

State University and Mississippi State University. These two universities are geographically close, and they are also culturally similar to each other. Therefore, a comparable result in these two populations was assumed to increase external validity.

To obtain a representative sample of both campuses, lists of emails of registered students for Spring 2014 semester were obtained from the registrar office. The registrar's offices did a random selection and to obtain four thousand email addresses for this study. The email lists were randomly divided and sent two versions of the online survey with one group viewing the experiential oriented video and the other group viewing functional oriented video. The email invitation with the survey link was sent out and followed by three reminders, after three weeks the survey was closed. Email surveys allow respondents to have sufficient time to think about the questions and provide exact information. The respondents received an email containing the URL of the survey, when respondents finished responding to the survey, the results were submitted online through qualtrics ([www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com)), an online survey hosting site. As an incentive to participate, respondents were entered in a random drawing for four \$25 Wal-mart gift cards. A total of responses of 444 were collected, which is about 10% response rate. After data cleaning, 381 responses were included for empirical study.

## CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

This chapter consists of three major sections. The first section begins with an overview of participants' characteristics, followed by model development and hypotheses testing. The chapter concludes with the results of hypotheses testing.

### 4.1 Characteristics of the Respondents

#### 4.1.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 2. The survey results revealed a majority of participants were between 20-29 years old with 64.8% being females and 68.1% classified as undergraduates. The fact that the sample consisted of a larger number of females than males may be attributed to the fact that fashion is associated with females more than males (Khare & Rakesh, 2010; Koester & May, 1985). The percentage of undergraduates was higher, which is comparable with other studies that indicate that this age group is "wired from birth".

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (n=381)

Demographic	Variable	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	64.8
	Male	35.2
Age	<20	21.4
	20-29	66.2
	30-39	5.7
	40-49	4.3
	>50	2.4
Classification	Undergraduate	68.1
	Graduate	29.5
	Non-Traditional	1.4



#### 4.1.2 Social Media Usage

Because viral marketing is done on social media, respondents' general social media usage was profiled. Self-developed questions regarding social media sites usage, social media sites frequency and social media frequency were included in the survey. In response to social media sites usage, 10 common social media sites were listed and participants were asked to check all that apply; there was an option of 'other' for respondents to list sites not listed. Respondents were then asked to rank among the 10 sites the site that they most frequently used. Finally questions on how frequently they used social media with questions indicating once a day to several times a day. The results indicate that Facebook and Twitter ranked highest and were the most frequently used. In the other category the following social media sites were listed as being used; Tumblr, Vine, Mysapce, Reddit, SnapChat, Pandora, Hulu, Wanelo, Renren, Skype, OkCupid, Tango and Britco. It was also evident that most respondents used social media several times a day.

Table 3 presents the responses given by the 381 respondents, it shows the percentage and number of respondents' use of social media.

Table 3: Social Media Usage

Social Media sites	Registered Account	%	Ranking of most frequently used site (Mean)	Frequency of media use	No.
Facebook	367	95.8	2.1	Less than once a month	7
Twitter	288	75.2	3.8	A few times a month	7
Pinterest	217	56.7	4.8	A few times a week	25
LinkedIn	158	41.3	7.1	About once a day	48
Instagram	269	70.2	4.1	Several times a day	289
Google+	183	47.8	5.6		
Blogs	89	23.2	6.2		
Youtube	267	69.7	4.0		
Wechat	15	3.9	8.0		
other	39				

## **4.2 Measurement Assessments**

In this study, structural equation modeling (SEM) with AMOS was used to develop the model of consumers' responses toward social media marketing message. In building structural equation models, the measurement model must first be specified. Testing the measurement model involves specifying which observed variables define a construct, and ascertaining the extent to which the indicator items are actually measuring the latent construct proposed in the research model (Byrne, 2010; K. Kumar, 2012). Exploratory factor analysis was first conducted to examine the structure of the measures for motivations, attitudes, and intentions to forward a social media marketing message respectively. Then a confirmatory factor analysis was performed to purify the scales and assess uni-dimensionality, validity and reliability of the scales.

### **4.2.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis**

#### **Core Model Constructs**

Exploratory factor analysis, using a Principal Component Analysis method was performed on 53 items for measuring the identified research constructs; moderating variables, motivations, attitude towards viral messages and intention to forward the message were used to assess measurement structure and validity. The first iteration of analysis identified two items with low commonalities and consequently the two items were dropped. The remaining 51 items were again factor analyzed. The second round of factor analysis identified 14 items with low loadings on specified factor or high cross-loading on other factors, and therefore those 14 items were dropped. The third-round factor analysis on the rest of 37 items dropped 12 more items with low factor loading or high cross-loading. Finally, the factor solution from the last iteration of the remaining 25 items were again factor analyzed resulting in commonalities ranging from

.652 to .924. The total extracted cumulative variance is 79.82%. The rotated component matrix showing the items and factor loadings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4:-Factor Structure of Intention to Forward Fashion Viral Message

Factor	Scale item	EFA Loadings	Reliability
Motivation: Interpersonal Utility	To keep contact with my friends	.841	.937
	To strengthen my relationships with my friends	.822	
	To keep in touch with other people	.767	
	To make me feel I am in touch with others	.753	
	To keep my friends up-to-date	.698	
Motivation: Entertainment	For diversion	.784	.924
	Because it is fun	.783	
	It cheers me up	.780	
	To relax	.753	
Motivation: Social benefits	Because I think it might be interesting to others	.815	.917
	To inform other people	.796	
	To help other people	.754	
	To share my interests or feelings	.647	
Utilitarian attitude	This video is easy to be understood.	.878	.885
	This video expresses its ideas clearly.	.855	
	This video shows trend and novelty.	.754	
	This video is informative.	.749	
	This video is happy.	.743	
Value-expressive attitude	This video is humorous.	.898	.898
	This video is funny.	.881	
	This is amusing.	.831	
Intention to forward a social media marketing message	I will share this video to my family through social media.	.893	.930
	I will share this video to my friends through social media.	.875	
	I will recommend this video to others.	.761	

To assess the reliability of the variables, Cronbach's alpha was calculated. Cronbach's alpha is a widely used measure for assessing the reliability of a psychometrically developed scale (Peter, 1979). In addition, Cronbach's alpha was used to examine the internal consistency of the measures. The value of the Cronbach's coefficient ranges from 0 and 1, where 0 indicates a completely unreliable measure and 1 indicates a completely reliable measure. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) recommend that the reliability of all latent constructs should exceed the benchmark of 0.70 as an indication of acceptable measures. Table 4 shows the reliability of all measures used in the study, in summary, all measures demonstrated acceptable degrees of reliability.

#### **4.2.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

To assess the properties of the measurement model, a confirmatory factory analysis was performed to determine whether the measured variable reliably reflects the hypothesized latent variable. Then uni-dimensionality, convergent validity and reliability were assessed. To assess the overall fit of the hypothesized measurement model, the research model was also evaluated according to the, comparative fit index (CFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA). These evaluations seek to minimize the impact of sample size and shift the research focus from exact fit to approximate fit. A 25-item, six dimension confirmatory factor model was estimated using AMOS 21. An inspection of model fit revealed that indices were generally below acceptable thresholds. An inspection of the modification indices (MIs) identified cross-loading items and high covariances between scale error items. These high cross-loading items were removed and adde correlation link was added between error items within the same construct.

A second confirmatory model was then estimated on the remaining 22 items. Model fit was substantially improved and exhibited a respectable fit:  $\chi^2_{(191)} = 417.89$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.19$ ,  $p = .000$ , CFI = .959, GFI = .899, RMSEA = .063. All modification indices were quite low and item squared multiple correlations (SMCs) ranged from .49 to .96. Table 5 shows the complete item measurement properties of the final six-dimension measurement model. Figure 3 shows the six-factor measurement model with all item loadings and SMCs.

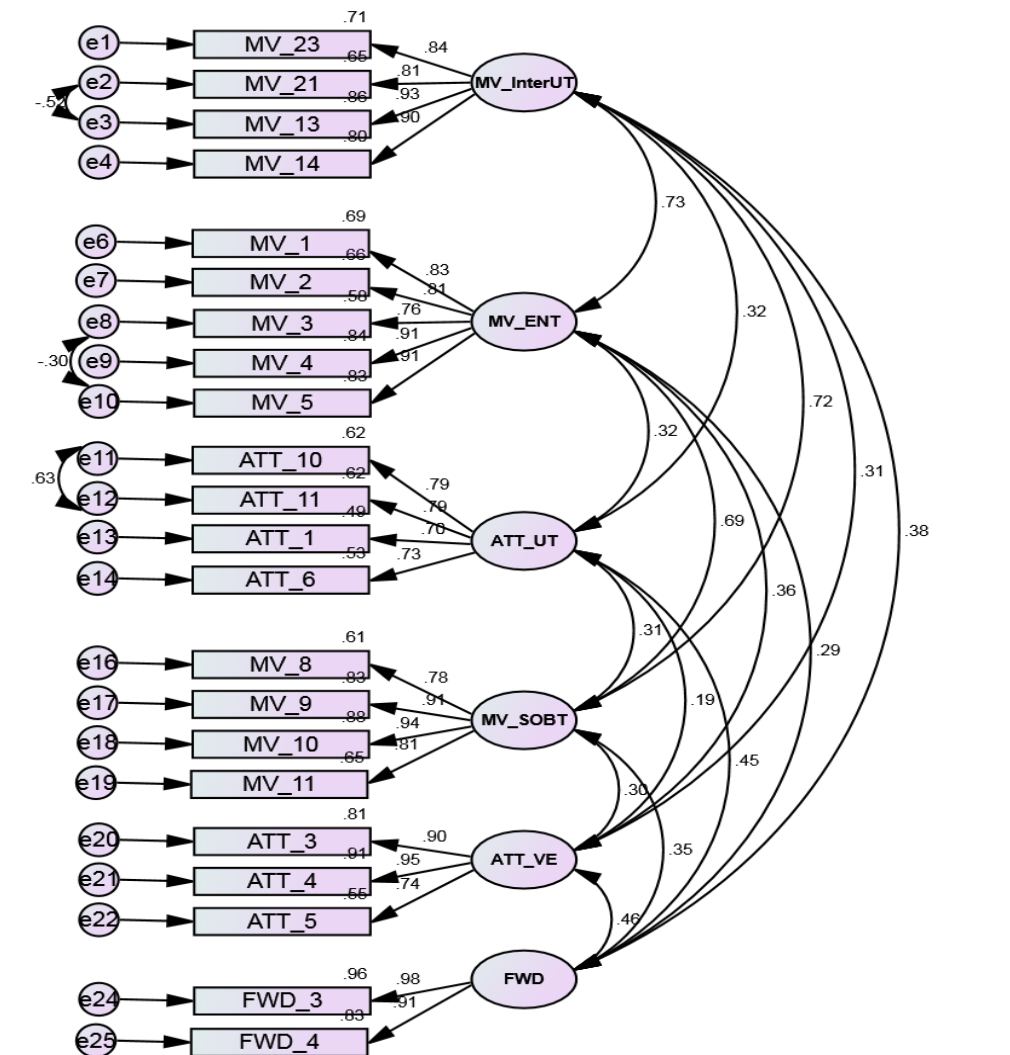


Figure 3: Measurement Model for the attitudinal model of Consumers' Responses toward a Social Media Marketing Message

Table 5: Scale/Item Measurement Properties

Dimensions	Items	Coefficient $\alpha$	CFA item loading	Squared multiple correlation	Scale/item mean
Motivation: Interpersonal Utility	To keep contact with my friends	.916	0.842	0.709	3.10
	To strengthen my relationships with my friends		0.807	0.651	2.81
	To make me feel I am in touch with others		0.925	0.856	3.19
	To keep in touch with other people		0.895	0.801	2.95
Motivations: Entertainment	For diversion	.924	0.834	0.696	2.99
	Because it is fun		0.810	0.656	2.87
	It cheers me up		0.761	0.579	3.15
	To relax		0.914	0.835	3.37
	To take an enjoyable break		0.911	0.830	3.41
Motivations: Social Benefits	Because I think it might be interesting to others	.916	0.780	0.608	2.90
	To inform other people		0.911	0.830	3.39
	To help other people		0.939	0.882	3.30
	To share my interests or feelings		0.806	0.650	3.20
Utilitarian Attitude	This video is easy to be understood.	.859	0.787	0.619	3.62
	This video expresses its ideas clearly.		0.788	0.621	3.74
	This video is informative.		0.701	0.491	3.69
	This video is happy.		0.730	0.533	3.42
Value Expressive Attitude	This video is humorous.	.898	0.900	0.810	3.15
	This video is funny.		0.953	0.908	3.17
	This is amusing.		0.744	0.554	3.49
Intention to Forward	I will share this video to my friends through social media.	.944	0.981	0.962	2.66
	I will recommend this video to others.		0.911	0.830	2.63

### 4.3 Model Development and Hypotheses Testing

Structural equation path analysis was performed to test the proposed research model and hypotheses. As the first step in assessing the measurement models, the structural equation models were evaluated by examining the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), Chi-Square/df and the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA). The proposed model (Figure 4) with intention to forward a social media marketing message as the dependent variable, the two dimensions of attitudes as mediating variables, and the emerged final three dimensions of motivations as exogenous variables. As a single indicator for each variable was required to perform the structural path analysis, the mean of the observed variables was used as a surrogate variable to represent each of the seven latent variables (Hair, Jr., Tatham, & Black, 1998).

The base model provided an acceptable initial fit (GFI = .978, CFI=.973, Chi-square/df = 5.01, and RMSEA = .117). However, the number if chi-square/df and RMSEA were relatively high. Nonetheless the initial model was modified to improve the fit and identify any problems with the base model. Inspection of Modification Indices (MIs) suggested adding a path between motivation of interpersonal utility and intention to forward a message. The revised model of intention to forward a social media marketing message provided an excellent fit, with GFI= .982, RMSEA = .065, and Chi-square/df = 2.259,  $p$  (for test of close fit) = .079. All paths in the model were significant at the level of  $p < .05$ . The revised model with standardized path coefficients and squared-multiple correlations is shown in Figure 5. Table 6 summarizes all path coefficients in the model.

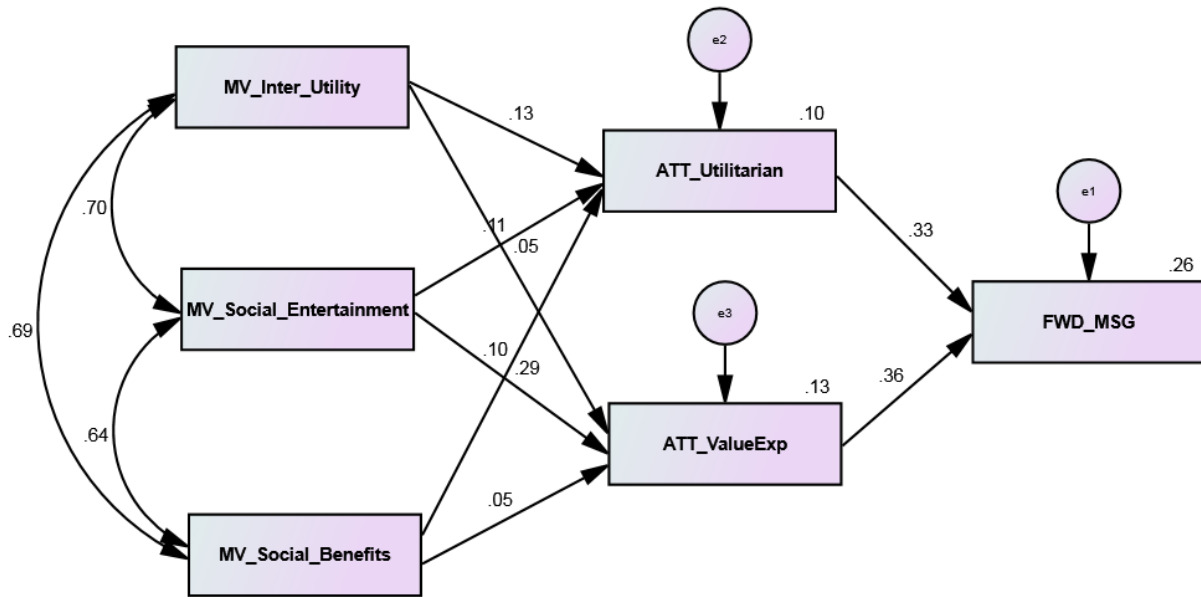


Figure 4: Structural Model of Consumers' Intention to Forward a Social Media Marketing Message

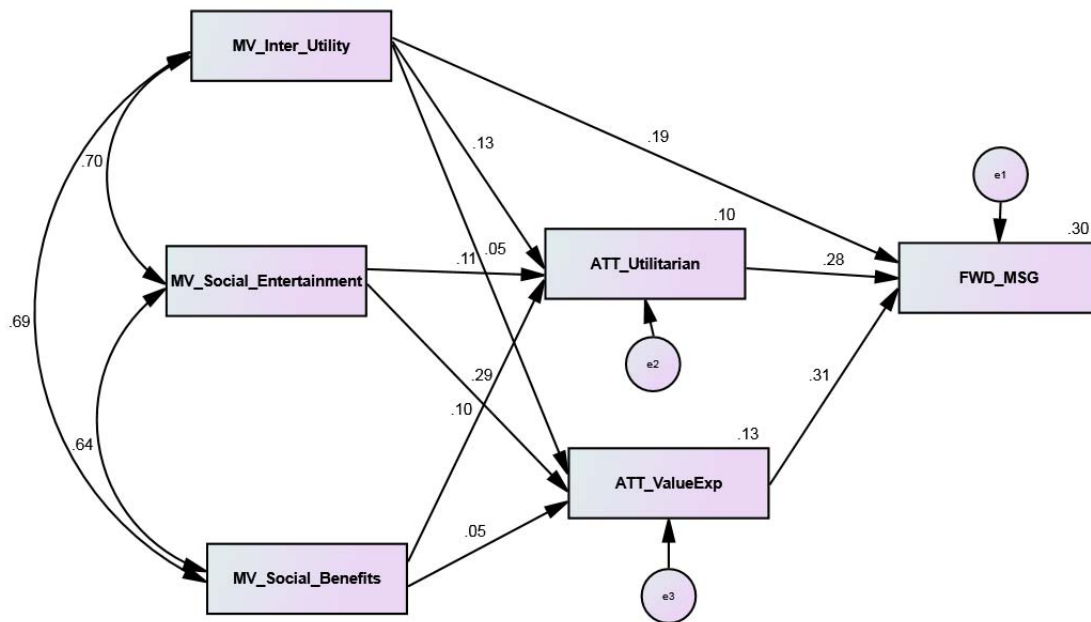


Figure 5: Modified Structural Model of Consumers' Intention to Forward a Social Media Marketing Message



Table 6: Statistics of Path Coefficients for Intention to Forward a Social Media Marketing Message

Path to	Path from	Coefficients	C.R. <sup>a</sup>	<i>p</i>	Hypothesis Testing
Intention to Forward	Utilitarian Attitudes	.284	5.57	***	H1a Supported
	Value Expressive Attitudes	.313	6.09	***	H1b Supported
	Motivation: Interpersonal Utility	.194	3.68	***	
Utilitarian Attitudes	Motivation: Entertainment	.114	1.31	ns	H2a Not supported
	Motivation: Social Benefits	.104	.887	ns	H2b Not supported
	Motivation: Interpersonal Utility	.132	1.32	ns	H2c Not supported
Value Expressive Attitudes	Motivation: Entertainment	.288	3.214	***	H3a Supported
	Motivation: Social Benefits	.053	.234	ns	H3b Not supported
	Motivation: Interpersonal Utility	.052	.69	ns	H3c Not supported

\*\*\*  $p < .0001$  \*\* $p < .05$ , \* $p < .01$ ; ns Not Significant;  
C. R. is critical ratio and similar to t test.

As shown in table 7, H1 proposed that favorable (a) utilitarian and (b) value expressive attitudes increase individuals' intention to forward a social media marketing message. Both hypotheses were supported with regression coefficients of .331 and .362 respectively. H2 proposed that stronger motivations of (a) entertainment, (b) social benefits, (c) interpersonal utility, and (d) self-enhancement from using social media will increase the degree of positive utilitarian attitudes toward a social media marketing message. However, this set of hypotheses are not supported by the empirical study results. One of the dimensions of motivations for using social media, self-enhancement did not emerge during the exploratory factor analysis state. The rest of proposed relationships did not show significance from the model testing results. H3 proposed that stronger motivations of (a) entertainment, (b) social benefits, (c) interpersonal

utility, and (d) self-enhancement from using social media will increase the degree of positive value expressive attitudes toward a social media marketing message. Only the relationship between entertainment and value expressive attitude is significant and hence this set of hypotheses is partially supported.

#### **4.4. Testing Moderating Effects**

##### **4.4.1 Moderating Effects of Consumer Fashion Traits**

###### **Fashion Trait Constructs**

Exploratory factor analysis, using a Principal Component Analysis method was performed on 13 items for measuring individual fashion traits, fashion leadership and fashion involvement. The first iteration of analysis identified 1 item with low commonalities and consequently the item was dropped. The remaining 12 items were again factor analyzed. The second round of factor analysis identified 2 items with low loadings on specified factor or high cross-loading on other factors, and therefore those 2 items were dropped. The last round factor analysis on the remaining 10 items resulted in a two-factor structure with commonalities ranging from .762 to .895. The total extracted cumulative variance is 79.04%. The rotated component matrix showing the items and factor loadings and Cronbach's alpha are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Two-Factor Structure of Consumer Fashion Traits

Factor	Scale item	EFA Loadings	Reliability
Fashion involvement	Fashion clothing is important to me.	.883	.965
	Fashion clothing is a major part of my life.	.854	
	Fashion clothing means a lot to me.	.849	
	I think about fashion clothing a lot.	.844	
	I am interested in fashion clothing.	.816	
Fashion leadership	I influence the types of clothing fashions my friends buy.	.858	.924
	Often others turn to me for advice on fashion and clothing.	.821	
	Many of my friends and neighbors regard me as a good source of advice on clothing fashions.	.806	
	I am among the first in my circle of friends to try new clothing fashions.	.804	

### Identifying Fashion Consumers

The mean of the observed variables was used as a surrogate variable to represent the two dimensions of latent fashion trait variables, fashion leadership and fashion involvement.

The mean indicators measure fashion leadership and involvement were recoded respectively, any individual with the average scores of 3 and above is identified as fashion leader or highly involved with fashion, and the other individuals with the average scores of lower than 3 identified as fashion followers or slightly involved with fashion. The results are indicted in the Table 8 below.

Table 8: Identifying Fashion Consumers

Fashion Involvement	No.	Fashion Leadership	No.
Low “1”	210	Follower “1”	205
High “2”	171	Leader “2”	178

## Testing Moderating Effects of Fashion Leadership

The sample is divided into two sub-samples including fashion leaders and followers respectively. Path model is conducted on the two sub-samples separately. Testing results showed that utilitarian and value expressive attitudes predict individuals' intention to forward social media fashion marketing message at the same significant levels cross the group of fashion leaders and followers. Therefore, the hypotheses 4a and 4b are not supported. Testing results are reported in Figure 6 and table 9 below:

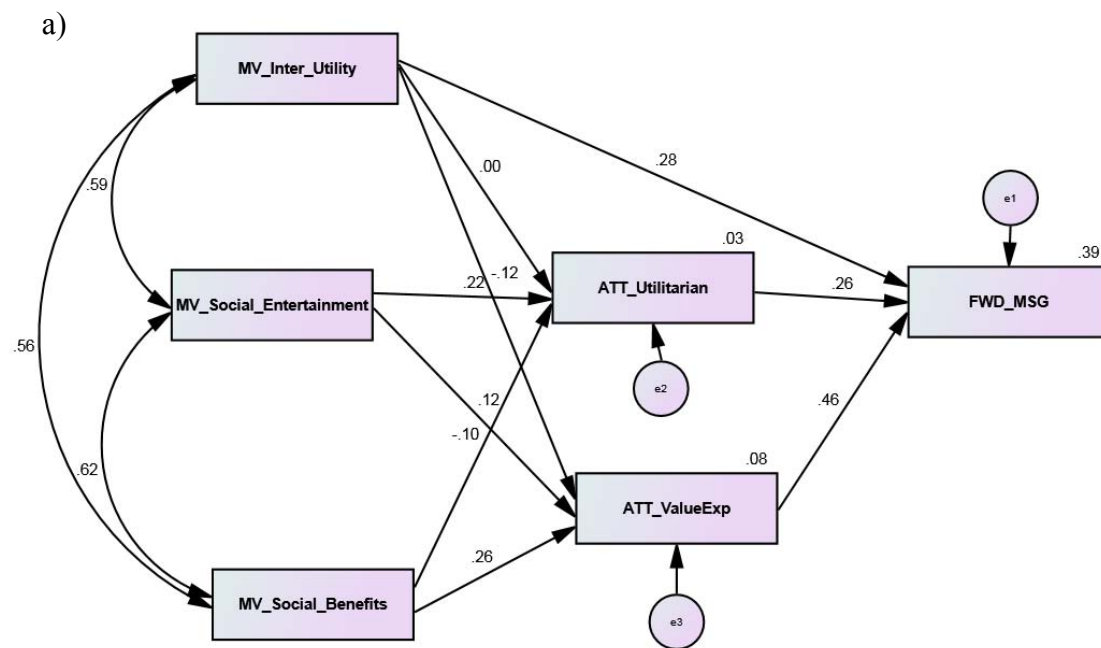


Figure 6: Moderating Effects of Fashion Leadership (a-Fashion Leader Group and b-Fashion Follower Group)

(figure 6 continued)

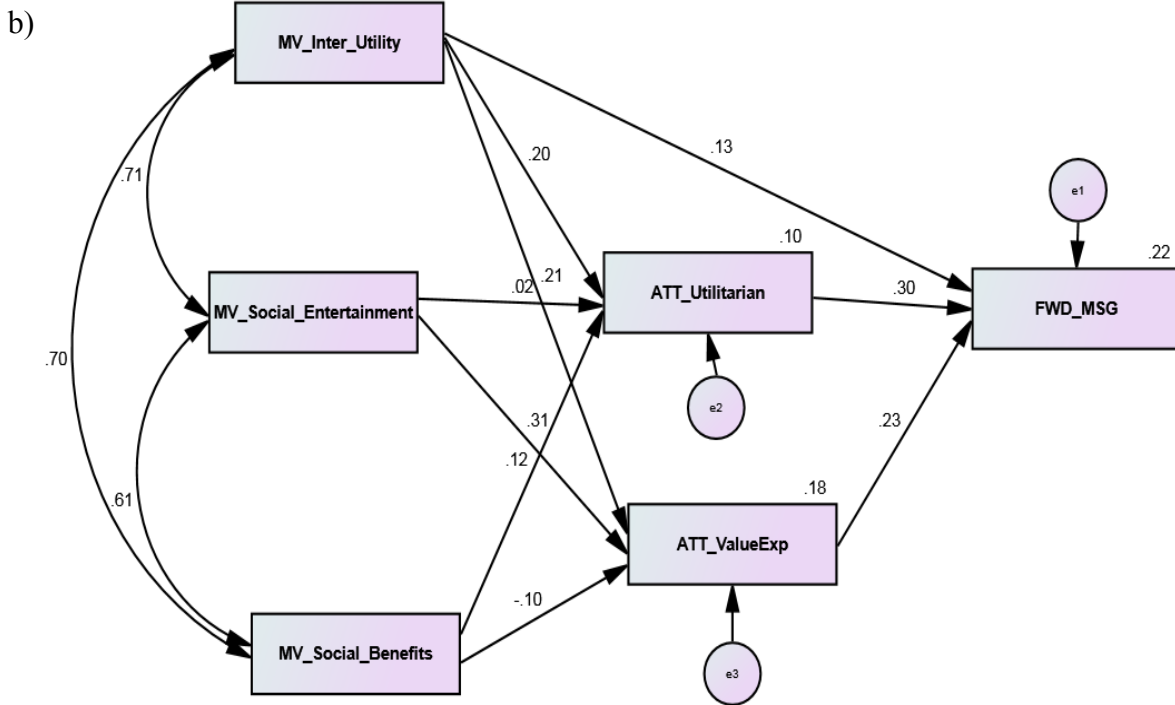


Table 9: Moderating Effects of Fashion Leadership

Path to	Path from	Coefficients		<i>p</i>		H4
		Leader	Follower			
Intention to Forward	Utilitarian Attitudes	.256	.301	***	***	H4a not supported
	Value Expressive Attitudes	.46	.226	***	***	H4b not supported

\*\*\*  $p < .0001$  \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .01$ ; ns Not Significant;

### Testing Moderating Effects of Fashion Involvement

The sample is divided into two sub-samples including individuals with high and low fashion involvement respectively. Path model is conducted on the two sub-samples separately. Testing results showed that utilitarian and value expressive attitudes predict individuals' intention to forward social media fashion marketing message at the same significant levels across the group with high fashion involvement and the group with low fashion involvement.

Therefore, the hypotheses 5a and 5b are not supported. Testing results are reported in Figure 7 and Table 10 below.

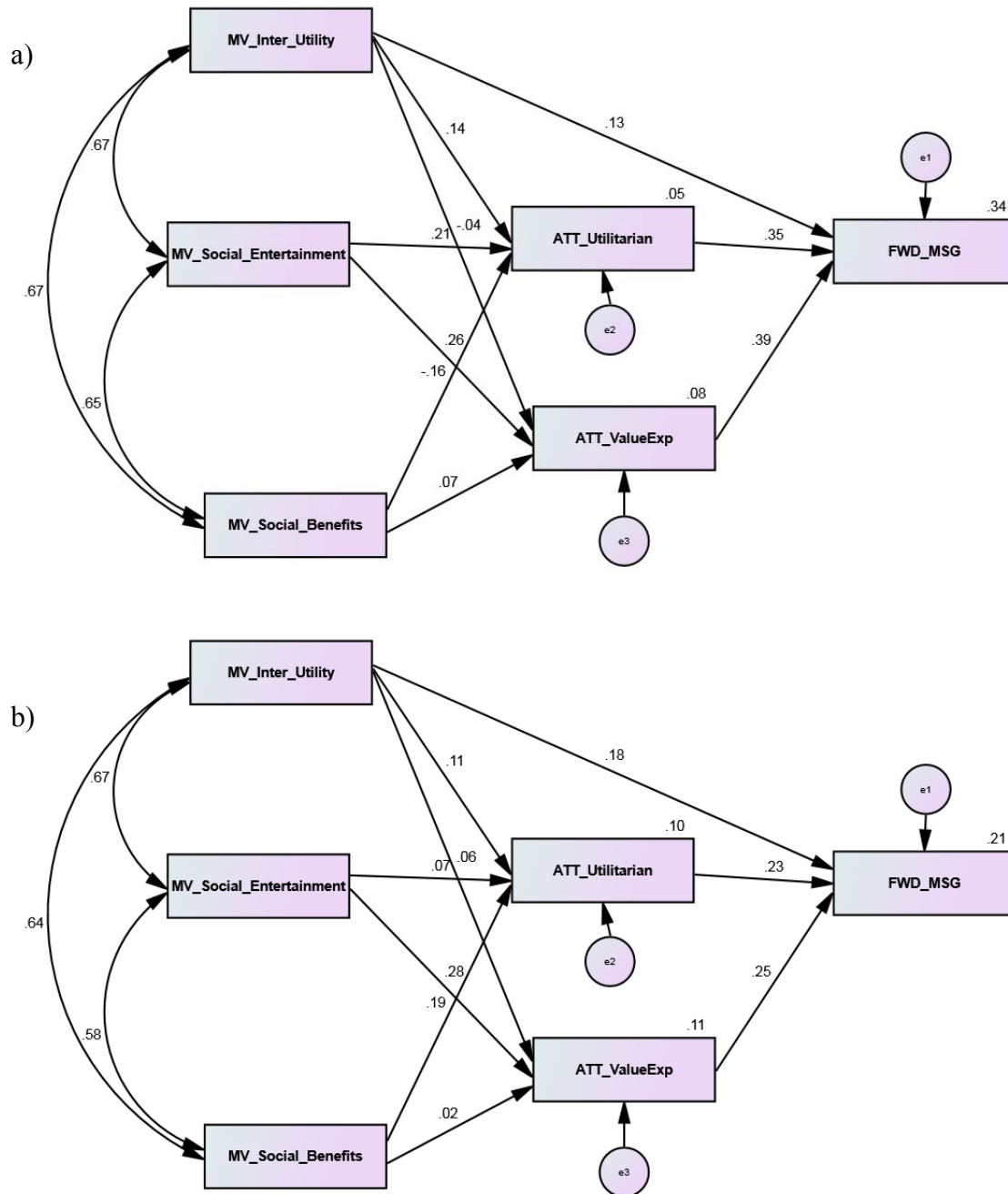


Figure 7: Moderating Effects of Fashion Involvement (a-Group with High Fashion Involvement and b- Group with Low Fashion Involvement)

Table 10: Moderating Effects of Fashion Involvement

Path to	Path from	Coefficients		High	<i>p</i>	H5
		High	Low		Low	
Intention to Forward	Utilitarian Attitudes	.355	.230	***	***	H5a Not supported
	Value Expressive Attitudes	.394	.255	***	***	H5b Not supported

\*\*\*  $p < .0001$  \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .01$ ; ns Not Significant;

#### 4.4.2 Moderating Effects of Social Media Message Orientation

It was proposed that individuals' utilitarian and value-expressive attitudes will be different when they view functional oriented and experiential oriented social media marketing message. A MONOVA test was conducted to test the mean differences of individuals' two dimensions of attitudes and intention to forward the social media marketing message between the groups viewing a functional oriented and a experiential oriented social medial marketing message. Results showed that the group viewing a functional oriented message formed a higher positive utilitarian attitude than the group viewing a experiential oriented message. On the contrary, the group viewing a experiential oriental message formed a higher positive value-expressive attitude than the other group viewing the functional oriented message. Interestingly, intention to forward a message holds consistently across the two groups viewing different social media marketing messages. Consequently, H6a, H6b are supported, but H6c is not supported. The results are shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Moderating Effects of Social Media Marketing Message Orientation

Dependent Variable				Mean Difference	<i>P</i>	Hypotheses Testing
ATT Utilitarian	Functional	Experiential	.494*	.000		H6a Supported
ATT Value expressive	Functional	Experiential	-.808*	.000		H6b Supported
FWD_MSG	Functional	Experiential	-.029	.850		H6c Not supported

#### 4.4.3 Moderating Effects of Individual Dynamic Traits

##### Testing Moderating Effects of Individual Viral Dynamics

An indicator variable was created by averaging the five items measuring individual viral dynamics. Then the sample was divided into two sub-samples by the mean of the indicator of individual viral dynamics with one group identified with high viral dynamics and the other group with low viral dynamics. A path model was conducted on the two sub-samples separately. Testing results showed that utilitarian and value expressive attitudes predict individuals' intention to forward social media fashion marketing message at the same significance levels cross the group of fashion leaders and followers. Results showed that motivations of social benefits significantly affect individuals' utilitarian attitudes for the group with lower viral dynamics, but not the group with high viral dynamics. In addition, individuals' motivations of social entertainment affects their value expressive attitude for the group with low viral dynamics, but not for the group with high viral dynamics. Therefore, the hypotheses 7a and 7b are partially supported. Testing results are reported in Figure 8 and table 12 below:

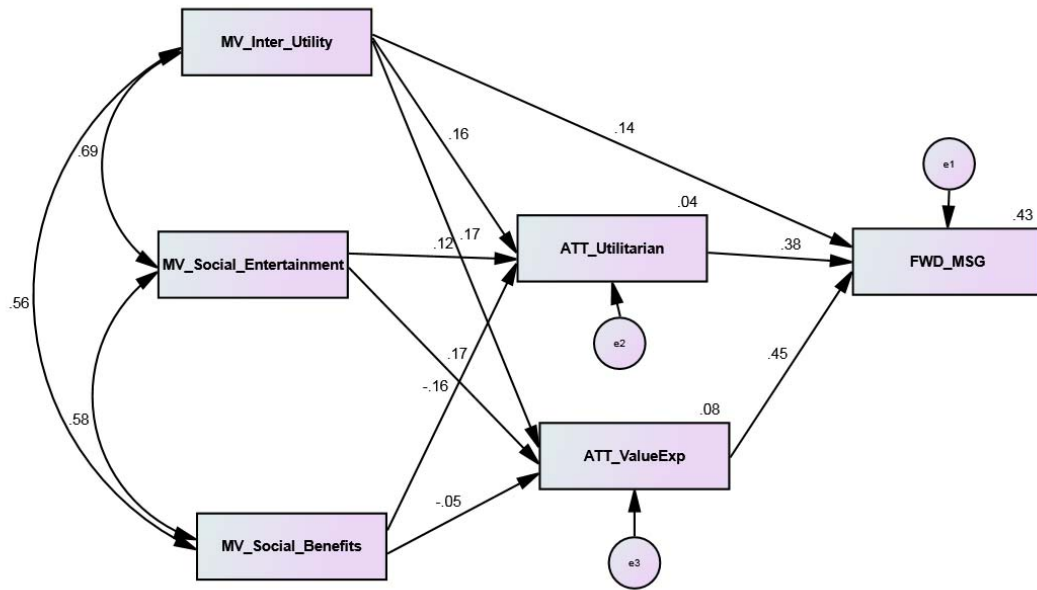
Table 12: Moderating Effects of Viral Dynamics

Path to	Path from	Coefficients		<i>p</i>		H7
		High	Low	High	Low	
Utilitarian Attitudes	Social	0.120	0.032	ns		H7a Partially supported
	Entertainment					
	Interpersonal	0.162	0.068	ns		
Value Expressive Attitudes	Utility	-0.155	0.211	ns	**	H7b Partially supported
	Social Benefits					
	Social	0.173	0.29	ns	***	
	Entertainment					
	Interpersonal	0.17	-0.036	ns		
	Utility	-0.052	0.105	ns		
	Social Benefits					

\*\*\*  $p < .0001$  \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .01$ ; ns Not Significant;



a)



b)

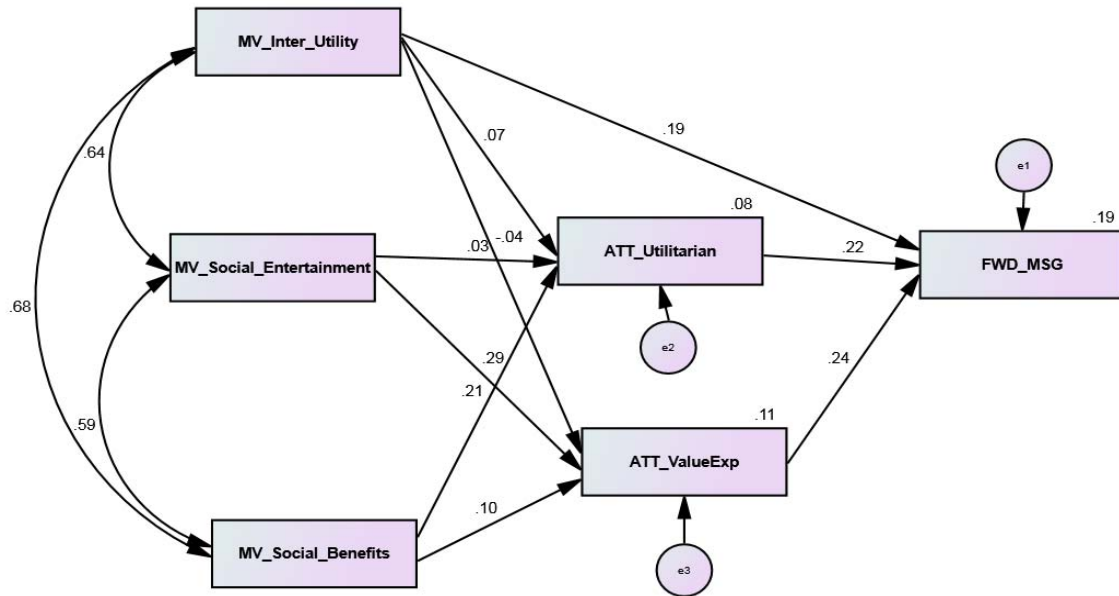


Figure 8: Testing Moderating Effects of Individual Viral Dynamics (a- High Viral Dynamics and b-Low Viral Dynamics)

## Testing Moderating Effects of Individual Structural Social Capital

An indicator variable was created by averaging the two items measuring individual structural social capital. Then the sample is divided into two sub-samples by the mean of the indicator of individual structural social capital with one group identified with high structural social capital and the other group with low structural social capital. Path model is conducted on the two sub-samples separately. Testing results showed social entertainment affects individuals' utilitarian attitude for the group with high structural social capital, but not the group with low structural social capital. Interpersonal utility affects individuals' utilitarian attitude for the group with low structural social capital, but not the group with high structural social capital. Social benefits affects individuals' value-expressive attitude for the group with low structural social capital, but not for the group with high structural social capital. Social entertainment affect both groups' value-expressive attitude, but at different significance levels. Therefore, H8a and H8b are considered partially supported. Testing results are reported Figure 9 and Table 13 below.

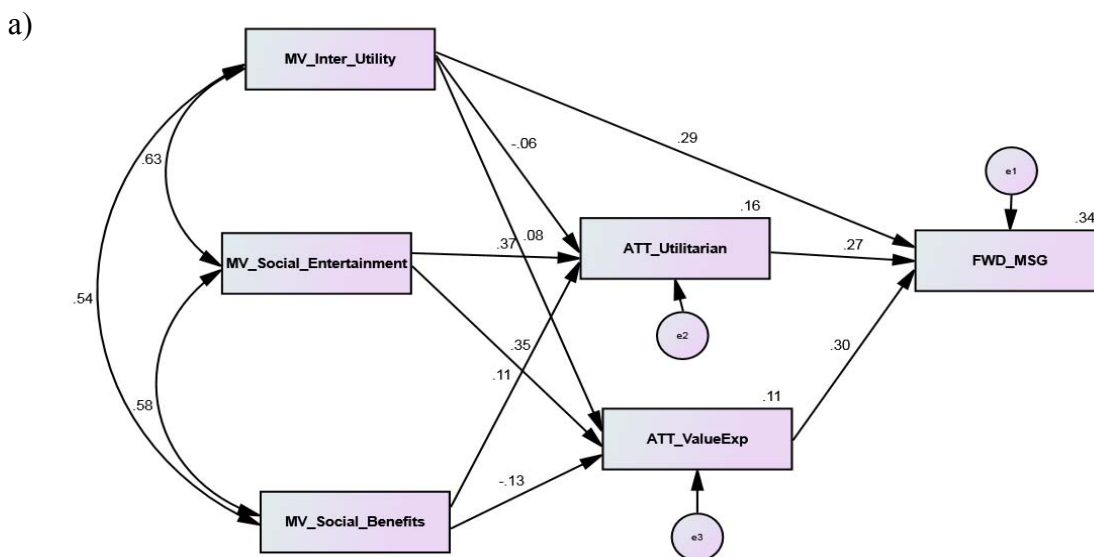


Figure 9: Moderating Effects of Individual Structural Social Capital (a- High Structural Social Capital and b- Low Structural Social Capital)

(figure 9 continued)

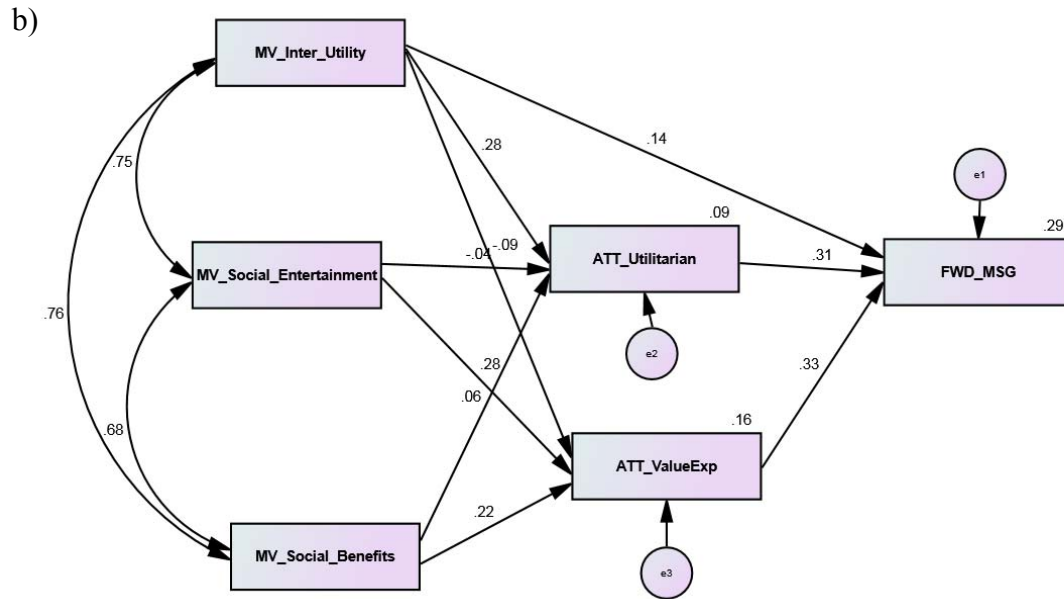


Table 13: Moderating Effects of Structural Social Capital

Path to	Path from	Coefficients		<i>p</i>		H8
		High	Low	High	Low	
Utilitarian Attitudes	Social Entertainment	0.366	-0.044	***	ns	H8a Partially supported
	Interpersonal Utility	-0.058	0.283	ns	**	
	Social Benefits	0.113	0.057	ns	ns	
Value Expressive Attitudes	Social Entertainment	0.348	0.282	***	**	H8b Partially supported
	Interpersonal Utility	0.076	-0.089	ns	ns	
	Social Benefits	-0.127	0.223	ns	**	

\*\*\*  $p < .0001$  \*\* $p < .05$ , \* $p < .01$ ; ns Not Significant;

This chapter presents statistical findings related to hypotheses addressed in chapter 2. In the next chapter, a discussion of conclusions related to these findings is addressed. Implications are provided. It is then concluded with limitations and future research directions.

## **CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

The overall objective of this study was to examine the motivation behind consumers passing on fashion viral messages. By integrating attitude theories of use and gratification and elaboration likelihood model, this research provided a framework within which to empirically examine consumers forwarding intentions of fashion viral messages. Moderating roles of consumers' fashion traits, message traits and individual dynamics traits in social media were used to further explore the model. Relevant consumer traits for fashion viral marketing examined included fashion leadership, fashion involvement, viral dynamics and structural social capital, functional and experiential orientation of a message were used as message traits (Aron, 2004; Cialdini, 2006; Hirschman & Adcock, 1978; Thorsten Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). More specifically, a model was formulated that enabled the testing of eight hypotheses to answer important research questions (see Figure 2). In this chapter, a discussion of the findings is provided. Then implications of the study are presented. Finally, the limitations pertaining to the study are identified, followed by brief suggestions for future research directions.

### **5.1 Discussion of Major Findings**

Most experts agree that social media will eventually become a mainstream platform for marketing (Camarero & San José, 2011; Chang & Zhu, 2011; Hensel & Deis, 2010; Ryffel et al., 2014). This research extends previous studies by examining the impact of motivation on consumers' attitude toward viral fashion messages and consequently the intention to forward the message. Many studies have focused on motivation and attitude, but this is the first study known to this researcher that focuses on developing an attitudinal model with moderating variables to examine intentions of forwarding fashion viral messages. The research questions were; what are the motivations for individuals involved with social media messages? How do these motivations

affect individuals' attitudes formation toward social media messages (see page 5) and consequently, their forwarding behavior? Consumer fashion traits, message traits and individual dynamic traits were used as moderating variables to answer these questions. Please see Table 14 for a summary of the results of hypothesis testing.

Table 14: A Summary of Hypotheses and Results

Hypothesis	Results
H <sub>1</sub> Individual's stronger favorable (a) Utilitarian attitude (b) Value-expressive attitude towards a social media marketing message will lead to higher intentions to forward the message	H1a Supported H1b Supported
H <sub>2</sub> Individuals' (a) entertainment; (b) social benefits (c)) Interpersonal Utility motivation will lead to positive Utilitarian attitudes towards a fashion social media marketing messages	H2a Not supported H2b Not supported H2c Not supported
H <sub>3</sub> Individuals' (a) entertainment; (b) social benefits (c) Interpersonal Utility motivation will lead to positive Value-expressive attitudes towards a fashion social media marketing messages	H3a Not supported H3b Not supported H3c Supported
H <sub>4</sub> The salience of the path between (a) utilitarian attitudes (b) value-expressive attitudes and intention to forward a fashion social media marketing messages will be different across groups of fashion leaders and fashion followers	H4a Not supported H4b Not supported
H <sub>5</sub> The salience of the path between (a) utilitarian attitudes (b) value-expressive attitudes and intention to forward a fashion social media marketing messages will be different across groups with high fashion involvement and low fashion involvements	H5a Not supported H5b Not supported
H <sub>6</sub> Individuals (a) utilitarian and (b) value-expressive attitudes, and (c) intention to forward a social media marketing message are different when they view functional oriented and experiential oriented social media marketing message	H6a Supported H6b Supported H6c Not supported
H <sub>7</sub> The salience of the path between individuals' gratification of needs for using social media and their (a) utilitarian attitudes, and (b) value-expressive attitudes will be different cross groups with high and low viral dynamics	H7a and partially supported
H <sub>8</sub> The salience of the path between individuals' motivation for using social media and their (a) utilitarian attitudes, and (b) value-expressive attitudes will be different cross groups with high and low structural social capital	H8a and b Partially supported

The results demonstrate that H1 was statistically significant indicating that utilitarian and value expressive attitudes increased individuals' intention to forward a social media marketing message. This supports Elaboration Likelihood Theory/Model which argues that, the attitude of a receiver can be changed by a persuasive message (Moore, 2001). People have all levels of involvement with messages; some are highly involved while others have almost no interest in what the communicator is trying to convey (Cacioppo et al., 1986). ELM states that there are two routes through which persuasive messages are processed; the central and peripheral. The belief is that the producer of the messages could use either one of the routes to better target a message to an audience. This study targeted utilitarian and value expressive attitudes, which relate to central and peripheral cues respectively.

In examining the H2 and H3; motivations for using social media, four motivations (a) entertainment, (b) social benefits, (c) interpersonal utility, and (d) self-enhancement were explored as they aligned with eWOM studies and hence used to examine viral marketing (Dichter, 1966). The goal of this research was to provide practitioners with insight into the important motivations associated with the forwarding of online content. Results from the study revealed that using these motivations will not increase the degree of positive utilitarian or value expressive attitudes toward a social media marketing message. Given the amount of clutter on the Internet a successful viral marketing message must not only attract attention, it must also give the viewer a reason to want to share this information with others. A viral marketing campaign has a greater chance of success if the marketer is able to develop marketing communication strategies that resonate with the target group, in other words, appeals to the key motivations for sharing information. It can be argued that entertainment, social benefits, and self-enhancement are poor motivators for increasing the degree of positive utilitarian or value expressive attitudes

toward a social media marketing message. To justify this argument, further exploration is needed of the same constructs. There are a number of different scales available that can potentially tap the same motivation constructs used in this study. Future studies using different scales might give different results.

However, from this research there was a relationship between interpersonal utility and value expressive attitude. As previously stated interpersonal utility refers to the use media to satisfy social interaction, affection, and other interpersonal needs (Shaojing, 2008). It impacts consumer attitude towards messages as it influences them in making purchase decisions (Tsang et al., 2004), it is therefore an important factor in determining the effectiveness of commercials. The findings of this study compare with other studies, for instance Zernigah and Sohail (2012) who considered interpersonal utility as a valuable incentive in viral marketing and recipients may react positively to the messages to meet this need. To this end, it is concluded that there is a positive connotation between a viral message and interpersonal utility because WOM motives encompass both interpersonal and media motives, it is therefore legitimate to argue that those antecedent factors impact motives to use viral marketing.

The fourth and the fifth hypotheses stating that the salience of the path between (a) utilitarian attitudes (b) value-expressive attitudes and intention to forward a fashion social media marketing messages will be different across groups of fashion leaders and fashion followers and across groups with high fashion involvement and low fashion involvements were not supported by the results from this study. Fashion leaders and followers and consumers with high and low fashion involvement were identified in the sample. However, contrary to conventional beliefs, only minor differences separated the two groups. Hence an indication that in a social media environment marketers need to target both groups.

Hypothesis six states that individuals' (a) utilitarian and (b) value-expressive attitudes, and (c) intention to forward a social media marketing message are different when they view functional oriented and experiential oriented social media marketing message. Both 6a and 6b were supported while 6c was not supported, one possible explanation for the support of this hypothesis is that not all messages are created equal. Some content is more "viral" than the other content. It is important to identify characteristics of messages, which are more readily forwarded by social media users to others. Therefore, future studies should consider examining more in-depth the characteristics of viral message content.

The seventh and the eighth hypotheses stating that the salience of the path between individuals' motivation for using social media and their (a) utilitarian attitudes, and (b) value-expressive attitudes will be different across groups with high and low viral dynamics and high and low structural social capital were both partially supported. Results showed that motivations of social benefits significantly affect individuals' utilitarian attitudes for the group with lower viral dynamics, but not the group with high viral dynamics. Similarly, individuals' motivations of social entertainment affects their value expressive attitude for the group with low viral dynamics, but not for the group with high viral dynamics. On the other hand the results showed social entertainment affects individuals' utilitarian attitude for the group with high structural social capital, but not the group with low structural social capital. Interpersonal utility affects individuals' utilitarian attitude for the group with low structural social capital, but not the group with high structural social capital. Social benefits affects individuals' value-expressive attitude for the group with low structural social capital, but not for the group with high structural social capital. Social entertainment affect both groups' value-expressive attitude, but at different significant levels. The results from this study imply that marketers need not necessarily target



individuals who have high viral dynamics and structural social capital, but rather all ranges are potential markets that should be targeted for the viral campaigns.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

With increasing competition for the market share, marketing of product has become part and parcel of a company's portfolio with one of the most important marketing strategy being the use of viral marketing in social media as a tool. Viral marketing involves creating a message that is so persuasive that customers will want to pass it on to their social networks. Viral marketing can be very inexpensive as consumers pass the message on to others. Hence, there has been an increased interest in academic research addressing viral marketing, as the social media continues to advance.

For firms to be competitive, they need to adapt to new technologies or risk being left behind (Kotler and Armstrong (2009). The growth of social media is phenomenal, virally every business recognizes social media as the new mantra and is trying to use it as a platform for profitable campaigns as it provides opportunities for companies to enhance their businesses in a cost-effective and practical manner. Businesses want to be where it matters to their business. Therefore, the question of which personality characteristics determine consumer interest in viral marketing is becoming increasingly relevant for fashion marketers as they consider (1) whether to use viral marketing, (2) how to design it to appeal to different consumers, (3) to which type of consumer to promote such service options and (4) how to do so. Also, the question of whether various moderating variables impact the spread of viral messages is also becoming increasingly important for marketers.

### 5.3 Implications

One key factor in the definition of viral marketing is the exponential growth and the passing on of a marketing message to others. In this process to know how and why people engage in viral marketing is particularly relevant; in other words what process individuals follow when they receive a viral message and what kind of factors influence their forwarding intentions are key to understanding viral marketing.

This research approached the examination of viral marketing in social media in a robust and rigorous way with an aim of adding value to the existing literature on viral marketing in the digital environment. First, by comprehensively reviewing the previous research relating to this subject, as well as consumer reports on social media usage, and then developing a strong research rationale, encompassing both theoretical and practical components. A theoretical conceptual framework was developed to guide the research by integrating well-established attitude theories research. Empirical data were collected through an online survey to assess why consumers forward viral messages. Finally, factor analysis was conducted on all measures followed by a two-set structural equation modeling to test the proposed research model and hypotheses. Overall, the successful integration of well understood theories on social media research have added to knowledge by contributing a better understanding of the concept of viral marketing thereby providing important implications, from theoretical, practical and empirical perspectives.

Even though social media has changed the tactics of marketing, its primary goals remain the same; ultimately attracting and retaining customers (Weber, 2009). No known study has explored fashion consumer motivations and attitude to forward fashion viral marketing campaigns messages. The results of this study contribute to the effective use of a viral marketing

campaign in social media context. From a theoretical perspective, research on social media campaigning is still in its infancy (Noort, Antheunis, & Reijmersdal, 2012), this research adds literature to the research on social media campaigning. In sum, viral marketing challenges researchers and marketers to understand consumer responses to viral marketing messages and the implications these may have for brands (Campbell, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2011).

Understanding how to target consumers using viral marketing strategies will help to draw timely marketing strategies for firms.

### **5.3.1 Theoretical Implications**

Social media provides a new framework within which to test developed theories and to apply current theories in a more innovative manner to better understand consumer behavior. The results add to existing literature related to digital and fashion marketing explained by the integration of attitude theories. This research also adds to the limited studies done with viral marketing, and allows future research to build upon it. It enriches the attitude literature, by integrating the uses and gratification theory and elaboration likelihood model and to overcome limitations on both theories. In summary, this research is highly recommended for scholars and practitioners of marketing, consumer behavior, and innovation, and is especially important to marketers. The research model proposed advances a trend of inter-disciplinary integration in scholarly research. A variety of managerial recommendations based on the results are put forward.

### **5.3.2 Practical Implications**

The findings of this research have important practical implications for marketers. The results provide valuable information to companies that would potentially enable them to improve their performance. The results show that fashion consumers pass on viral messages when the

message content matches with their cues. When individuals are faced with large numbers of messages every day, they will select what is relevant to them and discard what is not. Therefore, the first barrier for viral messages in the social media context is the moment of opening. Once a viral message has been received, individuals decide whether or not to open it. When the message received is from a friend, the likelihood of it being opened is much greater (De Bruyn and Lilien 2008), and once open, recipients will then decide whether or not to forward it to their contacts. Actually opening the message acts as the trigger factor in this process. Message subject or content is a determinant factor of eWOM ((Dichter, 1966), this could involve subject or content such as entertainment, the slogans, the presentation of the product and the site can become a topic of the conversation. Focusing on the “message” rather than the product can determine viral marketing.

It is therefore important that apparel firms meet the cues of the consumer to ensure a positive perception for the user to perceive the message as worthy of passing on. The growing use of social media and viral marketing is important to apparel firms due to their huge economic potential since this lowers the cost of marketing. It is without doubt a sensible strategy to be equipped for the increasing significance of viral marketing in the future, and to build sufficient expertise in every firm today in preparation for tomorrow. The results of this research can help fashion marketers to better understand how to tap viral marketing on social media. This is an early indication of the impact users have on marketing activities. In line with this trend, and building on previous research (e.g. Burton & Khammash, 2010; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Ho & Dempsey, 2010), this study highlights the importance of message traits that lead to a stronger attitude toward viral messages in social media.

In addition, the results provide a preliminary venue for firms to target their customers. To effectively target specific consumer segments, retailers need to segment their customers based on their motivations. Not only do many marketers realize the high cost of traditional marketing, they also recognize the significance viral marketing can bring to their firms. Since businesses have the knowledge about this demographic composition, they need to respond by meeting their needs online. As technology keeps advancing firms need to capitalize on making their presence felt in social media; most experts agree that once the best way to communicate, advertise and market products and services on line is determined, then social media will continue to be very significant to companies and individuals.

#### **5.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions**

There have been a number of studies that have examined marketer's use of viral marketing, however, to date no research to this researcher's knowledge has been done to explore forwarding intentions with relation to moderating variables. Despite adding to a growing body of knowledge on online consumer behaviors, there were limitations to the study. Firstly, the sample is not representative of general population, as it is intentionally biased towards those who already use social media. Also the consumers in this study are specified as college students. While the use of student samples can impede concluding how non-student consumers will respond, given the primary objective of this research was to provide insights into the psychology of fashion consumers, the use of a student sample is justified. Moreover, as discussed previously, college students tend to be heavy users of social media and thus comprise an important segment to marketers. Due to the unique characteristics of this group, their attitudes and behavior may result in different outcomes from studies of general consumers. Therefore, it is suggested for future

research studies on forwarding intentions of viral messages to replicate this study using a general population.

Even though the proposed attitudinal model of viral marketing acceptance moderating effects of consumer fashion traits, message traits and individual dynamic traits is robust, further testing is necessary to improve the representiveness and generalizability of the model.

Furthermore, our research conclusions are drawn from cross-sectional data of current social media users. Longitudinal studies would provide more conclusive evidence as to the process through which, attitudes, and intentions are formed and evolve over time. In addition, a comparative cross-national and cultural research is needful, to understand this phenomenon.

This research paves the way for future studies that apply elaboration likelihood model and uses and gratification theory in the context of social media to aid in understanding viral marketing as research is still ongoing on the subject, and it needs gradual refinement. Also, more in- depth fashion consumer motivation research should be conducted, utilizing robust qualitative procedures. Particular attention should be paid to motivation (a) entertainment, (b) social benefits, (c) interpersonal utility, and (d) self-enhancement and examine the direct relationship between these motivations and intention to forward viral messages. Furthermore, the results are limited to the particular scales used. To this end there are a number of different scales that are available, which could potentially tap the same constructs used in the study, however, it is possible that the use of different scales might impact the results differently.

Although some limitations exist, this research design and empirical study was conducted in a rigorous manner with the guide of a theoretical research framework based on the limited resources available. Research questions were answered, and research objectives were achieved successfully.

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## APPENDIX A: IRB FORMS

### Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

-- Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at <http://research.lsu.edu/CompliancePoliciesProcedures/InstitutionalReviewBoard%28IRB%29/Item24737.html>

**LSU**  
Institutional Review Board  
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair  
131 David Boyd Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
P: 225.578.8692  
F: 225.578.5983  
irb@lsu.edu  
lsu.edu/irb

-- A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

(A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of parts B thru F.

(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)

(C) Copies of all instruments to be used.

\*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.

(D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)

(E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>)

(F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<http://research.lsu.edu/files/Item26774.pdf>)

1) Principal Investigator:  Rank:   
Dept:  Ph:  E-mail:

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each  
\*If student, please identify and name supervising professor in this space

Dr. Chuanlan Liu  
Rank: Associate Professor  
Department: Human Ecology  
Phone: 225-578 2400 Email: clliu@lsu.edu

IRB# E8226 LSU Proposal #  
☒ Complete Application  
☒ Human Subjects Training

3) Project Title:

Study Exempted By:  
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman  
Institutional Review Board  
Louisiana State University  
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall  
225-578-8692 | [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb)  
Exemption Expires: 3/21/2016

4) Proposal? (yes or no)  If Yes, LSU Proposal Number   
Also, if YES, either  
☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant  
OR  
☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students)   
\*Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the aged, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature  Date  (no per signatures)

\*\* I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted ☒ Not Exempted ☐ Category/Paragraph 2  
Signed Consent Waived? Yes ☒ No ☐  
Reviewer Mathews Signature Robert C. Mathews Date 3/22/13

### **Consent Script**

Dear Respondents,

I am a PhD student majoring in fashion merchandising at Louisiana State University. I am conducting dissertation research to analyze fashion viral marketing campaigns used in social media and their implications for fashion marketing. Your input is very important to my study.

You are invited to participate in this study. It only takes about 15 minutes to complete this survey. There is no right or wrong answer to the questions. Your answer will be kept confidential and anonymous. You can work at your own pace. You may stop filling out this survey at any time you feel uncomfortable. By filling out this survey, you are agreeing to participate in this study.

Thank you in advance for your participation. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask the researchers. We would be glad to assist you. In addition, this study has been approved by Louisiana State University Institution Review Board; if you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact Institution Review Board at (225) 578 8692.

#### **Researchers:**

Caroline Kobia PhD, Graduate Student      Phone (225-7542347): [ckobia1@lsu.edu](mailto:ckobia1@lsu.edu).

Chuanlan Liu, Ph. D., Associate Professor      [clliu@lsu.edu](mailto:clliu@lsu.edu)

Study Exempted By:  
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman  
Institutional Review Board  
Louisiana State University  
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall  
225-578-8692 | [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb)  
Exemption Expires: 3/21/2016

## APPENDIX B: SURVEY QUESTIONS



Dear Respondents,

I am a PhD student majoring in Fashion Merchandising at Louisiana State University. I am conducting a research to better understand fashion viral marketing campaigns in the context of social media to provide implications for small business to take advantage of social media to increase brand awareness or sales through viral marketing campaigns.

You are invited to participate in this study. Your input is very important to this study. It only takes about 15 minutes to complete this survey. This is a multimedia questionnaire, so please ensure you have access to a computer with video and sound. If you are in a public computer lab, please use headphones while completing the questionnaire.

You can enter to win one of the four \$25 Walmart gift cards after completing the questionnaire.

There is no right or wrong answer to the questions. Your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. You can work at your own pace. You may stop filling out this survey at any time when you feel uncomfortable. By filling out this survey, you agree to participate in this study.

This study has been approved by Louisiana State University Institution Review Board. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask the researchers. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact Institution Review Board at (225) 578 8692. In advance, thank you for your participation.

Researchers:

Caroline Kobia PhD, Graduate Student      ckobia1@lsu.edu. Phone 225-754 2347  
Chuanlan Liu, Ph. D., Associate Professor      clliu@lsu.edu Phone: 225 578 2400

IRB APPROVED Approval Date (Study # 0212000011): August 29, 2012 | August 28, 2016



## PART 1

Viral messages can be online videos, posts, links, comments or ‘tweets’. Viral marketing campaigns are Internet-based ‘word-of-mouth’ using social media to spread messages. Examples of spreading a viral message are shown below:



Q 1. Which of the following social media sites have you ever registered an account? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Pinterest
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Google+
- ☐ Blogs
- ☐ Youtube
- ☐ Wechat
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Q 2. Click the item and move up and down to rank the following social media sites based on the frequency of your usage, with the first item indicating the most frequent usage.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Facebook (1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Twitter (2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pinterest (3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Google+ (4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Blogs (5)
- \_\_\_\_\_ YouTube (6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ WeChat (8)
- \_\_\_\_\_ LinkedIn (7)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Instagram (10)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other (11)

Q 3. On the average, how frequently do you use social media?

- ☐ Never (1)
- ☐ Less than once a month (2)
- ☐ A few times a month (3)
- ☐ A few times a week (4)
- ☐ About once a day (5)
- ☐ Several times a day (6)

Q4. On average, how often do you...

	Never (1)	Less than once a month (2)	A few times a month (3)	A few times a week (4)	About once a day (5)	Several times a day (6)
Open viral messages? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forward viral messages? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open fashion viral messages? (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forward fashion viral messages? (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q 5. Please indicate the number of...

- \_\_\_\_\_ Friends in your most frequently used social media account (1)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Family members in your most frequently used social media account (2)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Messages received from all your social media accounts (3)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Messages forwarded from all of your social media accounts (4)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Messages created and posted using all your social media accounts every week (5)

**The following questions are about your fashion opinions and experiences.**

Q 6. Based on your experiences in buying and wearing fashion clothes, please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I am willing to try new ideas about clothing fashions. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I always try something new in the next season's fashions. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am among the first in my circle of friends to try new clothing fashions. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I influence the types of clothing fashions my friends buy. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Often others turn to me for advice on fashion and clothing. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Many of my friends and neighbors regard me as a good source of advice on clothing fashions. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7. Based on your experiences in buying and wearing fashion clothes, please indicate your agreement with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Fashion clothing means a lot to me. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fashion clothing is a major part of my life. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I consider fashion clothing to be a central part of my life. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think about fashion clothing a lot. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in fashion clothing. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fashion clothing is important to me. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am very much involved in/with fashion clothing. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## PART 2

**Please share your social media viral message experience by indicating how you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.**

Q8. I open, read, and/or forward viral campaigns messages (online videos, posts, links, comments or “tweets”) while using social media because...

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
It cheers me up (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To relax (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
For diversion (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because it is fun (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To take an enjoyable break (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because I have nothing better to do (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To entertain other people (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q9. I open, read, and/or forward viral campaigns message (online videos, posts, links, comments or “tweets”) while using social media because

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
To belong to a group (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To express myself freely (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To meet people (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Because I wonder what other people said (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To feel involved with what’s going on with other people (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To strengthen my relationships with my friends (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To keep contact with my friends (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To keep my friends up-to-date (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q10. I open, read, and/or forward viral campaigns message (online videos, posts, links, comments or “tweets”) while using social media because

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
To express my joy about a fashion company I like (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To feel good when I can tell others about the fashion shown by the company (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To tell others about a great experience (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To shows others that I am a clever online user (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11 Continued...

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I believe providing fashion information to like-minded people is a nice thing. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is fun to communicate this way with other people (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make friends this way. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It means I can share my style with friends (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**PART 3**

Please play and watch the full video



Video 1.mp4



Video 2.mp4

Q12. Keeping in mind the video you just viewed, indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
This video is happy. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This video is interesting. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This video is funny. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This video is humorous. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This is amusing. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This video is informative. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This video is entertaining. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This video shows trend and novelty. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q13. Keeping in mind the video you just viewed, indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
This video is appealing. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This video expresses its ideas clearly. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This video is easy to understand. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This video is refreshing. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This video is pleasant. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Q14. Keeping in mind the video you just viewed, indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I think this video is worth sharing with others. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will recommend this video to others. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will share this video to my friends through social media. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will share this video to my family through social media. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### **PART 4**

Q15 Please indicate: Your age:

- ☐ <20 (1)
- ☐ 20-29 (2)
- ☐ 30-39 (3)
- ☐ 40-49 (4)
- ☐ >50 (5)

Q16 Please indicate: Your gender:

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)

Q17 Please indicate: Your classification:

- ☐ Freshman (1)
- ☐ Sophomore (2)
- ☐ Junior (3)
- ☐ Senior (4)
- ☐ Graduate (5)
- ☐ Non Traditional (6)

Q18 Please indicate: Your classification:

- ☐ Caucasian/White (1)
- ☐ African American (2)
- ☐ Hispanic (3)
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander (4)
- ☐ American Indian/Aleut (5)
- ☐ Other (6) \_\_\_\_\_

Q19 Thank you for your time and participation. As a token of our appreciation, you may enter your email address below for a chance to win one of four \$25 Walmart gift cards. To maintain confidentiality, your email address will not be linked to your survey information. Email addresses will only be used to contact the gift card winners; all contact information will be erased after the drawing is completed.

## **VITA**

Caroline Makena Kobia was born in Likipia District, Republic of Kenya. She finished her undergraduate studies at Moi University, Kenya, in December 2000 where she earned a Bachelor of Education in Home Economics degree. Later, in 2003 she earned a Higher Diploma in Guidance and Psychological Counselling from Kenya Institute of Professional Counseling. After graduating, Caroline taught and headed the Guidance and Counselling Department at a high school in Kenya. In August 2008, she came to Louisiana State University to pursue graduate studies in Fashion Merchandising. In May, 2011 she earned her Master of Science in Fashion Merchandising. She then began her career in academia as an instructor of Fashion Design and Merchandising at Mississippi State University while pursuing her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Fashion Merchandising. Upon receiving her Doctor of Philosophy degree, Caroline plans on building a career as a college professor in the field of Textiles, Apparel Design, and Merchandising.